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THE LUCKY SEVENTH IN THE BULGE:
A CASE STUDY FOR THE AIRLAND BATTLE

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army
Command and General Staff College in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree

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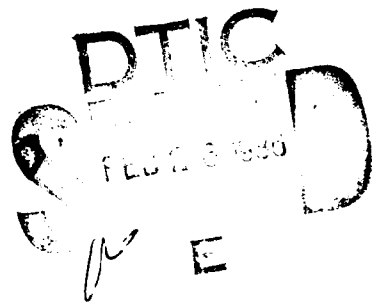
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Fort Leavenworth, Kansas
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ABSTRACT

THE LUCKY SEVENTH IN THE BULGE: A CASE STUDY FOR THE AIRLAND BATTLE, by Major Gregory Fontenot, USA, 218 pages.

This study examines the operations of the 7th Armored Division from 16 December 1944 through 29 January 1945. The focus is on the nature of combat as seen from the perspective of battalion through division-level commanders. The 7th Armored Division provides data on defensive operations, withdrawal, reconstitution and offensive operations. This data is used to examine the validity of the AirLand Battle concepts of "agility," "initiative," "depth" and "synchronization."

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My mistakes are my own.

Gregory Fontenot
15 May 1985

INTRODUCTION

Some years ago Brigadier General Thomas E. Griess observed that the "fraternity of scholars" viewed military history with "skepticism." General Griess asserted that this stemmed partly from the natural inclination to consider warfare repugnant, but also because historians rebelled against the "utilitarian" aspects of the study of military history.¹ Consequently, most professional historians have preferred to deal with the history of military institutions or the causes and effects of war rather than with war itself. Battle history designed to provide soldiers with insight into their profession has been neglected. Not surprisingly, even those who have made military history their life's work have found the body of military history lacking in carefully researched and written histories of battles.

John Keegan has summed up this dilemma in his excellent book, The Face of Battle. Keegan noted that despite studying and teaching military history for years, he found himself "increasingly convinced that [he had] very little idea of what a battle 'can be like'."² Keegan felt that way because military history, as it has been traditionally written, did not meet his needs. The officer-cadets he taught at Sandhurst needed to know about battle itself rather than why battles occurred. Keegan argues that though much has been written about battles most historians eschewed recounting the conditions of battle to get on with their

analysis of the outcome of battles. Those authors who did grope with the "guidons and gunsmoke" aspects of battle most often painted a panorama of courage and glory with little accounting of the sad facts of filth, fear and ferocity.

This study will examine part of the Battle of the Bulge in the spirit that Keegan has suggested. One objective of this effort is to expose the face of that battle. There are two questions which are posed in this paper. First, what is a large battle like between forces which are mostly mechanized? Secondly, what can be learned about the utility of contemporary warfighting doctrine in the United States Army? The Bulge is an excellent source for this undertaking despite the massive amounts of material written about the dark days of December 1944 and the eventual resolution of the battle in the Allies' favor. In some ways the Battle of the Bulge was the greatest single event in the 200 year history of the United States Army. In scope, no other battle in the Army's history has approached it. Some 75,000 Americans paid with their blood or their freedom for the "victory" in the Bulge.

Forty years later the battle remains controversial. Historians and soldiers have debated the many aspects of the Bulge since the crisis passed in the last week of 1944. They have argued over how the Allies could have been so thoroughly surprised. Some have debated the merits of Eisenhower's decision to give Montgomery responsibility for the northern half of the Bulge. John S. D. Eisenhower's

The Bitter Woods is of this genre. In his work, Eisenhower has defended his father's decisions before, during, and after the battle against challenges raised primarily by European historians such as Chester Wilmot. There have also been unpleasant questions raised about the quality of American soldiers and their leaders. Charles Whiting's Death of a Division damns the leadership of the 106th Infantry Division. R. E. Dupuy's Lion in the Way is a spirited defense of that same division. John Toland's Battle: The Story of the Bulge has gone a long way toward describing the battle; but in his effort to tell the whole story, the great scope of the battle has overwhelmed insight into the conduct of the many engagements which made up the battle. Finally, most historians do not see the battle through to its end. For example, Hugh Cole, who has written the definitive account of the battle, ends his study with the opening of the 3rd Army offensive on 3 January 1945, but the Germans were not driven back to their start points until the first week of February.³

All of the works cited here are useful and well-worth reading. None of them, however, were undertaken with the intention of providing soldiers with some insight on waging war. This essay attempts to fill this gap using historical narrative combined with analysis. The tools of that analysis are the operational concepts of initiative, agility, depth and synchronization as embodied in the 1982 edition of FM 100-5, Operations. This study is undertaken

in the belief that contemporary American soldiers can gain an understanding of the application of these concepts from an historical example. The single caveat is that the reader must not approach history as a primer for action in the present, but rather as a guide for considering contemporary problems.

Some explanation of what is meant by the terms "initiative," "agility," "depth" and "synchronization" is necessary to insure a common basis of understanding between the author and the reader. Clearly, these concepts interact and include important moral aspects as well. They are not merely commandments which must be memorized and recited on demand, they are a way of thinking about and conducting war.

"Initiative" should be taken to mean more than enjoying the advantages of the attacker. Simply put, initiative is forcing the enemy to react rather than reacting to him. This is the essence of the doctrine found in FM 100-5. That doctrine is decidedly proactive and adherence to it requires commanders and soldiers to get inside of the enemy force and preclude them from acting as they would like.

"Agility" denotes both a physical and mental attribute. Physically it requires high levels of mobility. Mentally it requires the rapid execution of decisions made quickly and soundly on the basis of accurate information. But, agility means more than speed, it also means flexibility.

"Depth" also occurs in two dimensions--time and space. Depth implies fighting forward of, on the line of, and to

the rear of the line of contact. The concept of depth suggests commanders need to be able to influence territory well forward of the positions of their units in such a way as to disrupt the enemy's following and reserve forces. Thus, depth includes striking the enemy before he can close with friendly troops.

Finally, "synchronization" is the ability to bring forces and firepower to bear in a way which will produce synergistic results on the enemy. Synchronization is the combination of the commander's elements of combat power, sequentially or concurrently, in such a way as to produce effects which are greater than the sum of those elements. Additionally, synchronized effort stems from a clear understanding of the commander's intent and includes maneuver as an element of combat power.

The Seventh Armored Division⁴ is the vehicle for this historical study in the application of these concepts. This essay will trace and examine the experiences of the 7th from the time it was alerted for deployment in the St. Vith area on 16 December 1944, until it recaptured St. Vith on 23 January 1945. The "Lucky Seventh" merits this attention for two reasons. First, to some extent its contributions have been overlooked because the magnificent stand of the 101st Airborne Division at Bastogne has overshadowed the equally important stand of the 7th at St. Vith. Secondly, it deserves study because in its six weeks in the Ardennes the 7th undertook nearly every imaginable mission. All of

these missions are among those essential to achieving the ends of the AirLand Battle which is to defeat a numerically superior enemy. The 7th accomplished its missions with the skill and aplomb which will have to become the standard in the American Army if it is to conduct the AirLand Battle.

The 7th had a very busy six weeks beginning with the movement to St. Vith on 17 December when it moved some sixty-five miles and deployed into combat from its march columns. From 17 through 21 December, the Division defended St. Vith against elements of the 5th and 6th Panzer Armies. On the 21st the Germans forced the 7th out of St. Vith, but it continued to hold east of the Salm River until XVIII Corps ordered its withdrawal. During this withdrawal, which was done mostly during daylight hours, the Division controlled elements of 9th AD, 28th ID, 106th ID, and various other Corps and Army units. On crossing the Salm, the Division passed through the 82nd Airborne and occupied positions in the vicinity of Manhay, Belgium, where they extended the line to the west as part of the effort to hold the northern shoulder of the German penetration. The 7th was relieved on 30 December 1944. From then until they went back on the attack on 20 January 1945, the Division trained and refitted. Finally, attacking from the north, the 7th recaptured St. Vith on 23 January.⁵

The central contention of this thesis is that it is possible to gain insights from the past which have utility today. The 7th is the subject of this analysis because the

author believes that its experiences can offer such insights for students and practitioners of the AirLand Battle. This hypothesis binds the five chapters together. The first chapter sets the strategic and tactical conditions which prevailed in December 1944. The second chapter sees the 7th committed to the defense of St. Vith. In the third, the Division is driven from St. Vith and must withdraw across the Salm. Chapter Four chronicles the efforts of the 7th to refit and reconstitute and concludes with the Division recapturing St. Vith. The final chapter draws conclusions from the 7th's experiences.

ENDNOTES: Introduction

¹John Keegan, The Face of Battle (New York: The Viking Press, 1976), p. 15. Keegan's first chapter is a discussion of mainstream military history and his assessment of its shortcomings.

²John E. Jessup, Jr. and Robert W. Coakley, A Guide to the Study and Use of Military History (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1982), p. 26.

³This short paragraph makes no pretensions of being a complete review of the literature. See, John S. D. Eisenhower, The Bitter Woods (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1969); Chester Wilmot, The Struggle for Europe: World War II in Western Europe (New York: Harper and Row, 1952); Charles Whiting, Death of a Division (New York: Stein and Day, 1981); R. E. Dupuy, St. Vith: Lion in the Way (Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1949); and John Toland, Battle: The Story of the Bulge (New York: Random House, 1959).

⁴Hereinafter, the Seventh Armored Division will be cited as the 7th AD, the 7th, or the "Lucky Seventh." US units will be cited by full title on the first use and by standard abbreviation, or by numeral, thereafter.

⁵See, 7th Armored Division, After Action Report, December 1944 - January 1945. Hereinafter, all unit reports, summaries, or narratives will be cited by unit designation, AAR, month or date, and page number.

Chapter 1

THE GHOST FRONT

"The August battles have done it and the enemy in the West has had it."

SHAEF G-2 Summary, 23 August 1944

On 24 July 1944, after weeks of hard fighting within the invasion lodgement area, General Omar N. Bradley launched 1st Army on Operation COBRA. COBRA, Bradley's brainchild for breaking out of the Normandy beachhead, began with a tremendous aerial bombardment of the German frontline positions by over 2,000 Allied bombers. The aerial attack aimed at punching a hole in the German line through which Bradley's troops would pour. The bombers achieved the desired effect, but killed 500 Americans including Lieutenant General Lesley J. McNair, commander of Army Ground Forces. Moreover, the success of the bombers was not immediately apparent which provoked Eisenhower to assure Bradley that he would never again give the air forces the "green light."¹

Despite its inauspicious start, COBRA proved to be a great success. On 28 July, 1st Army seized Coutances behind the German defenses and the breakout was on. During the month of August, the Allies grew heady on the strong wine of a string of unbroken successes. The Allies crushed Hitler's Mortain counterattack in August, but missed destroying the Germans at Falaise. Nonetheless, the campaign of late summer carried the Allied armies across France in a headlong

rush. These happy days saw Bradley's armies racing hither and yon while on their left the British drove rapidly up the channel coast of France. The Allies seemed to be teaching the Germans a lesson in Blitzkrieg which led nearly everyone to believe the end of the war was at hand.

However, the Allied tide crested in September and things began to go awry. First and foremost, the logistical structure could no longer support the rush to the east. The Germans in the channel ports refused to give up. When forced to withdraw, they destroyed the harbor facilities. Consequently, the armies still had to be supplied, to a large degree, over the invasion beaches. At the available ports, clearances were so inadequate that in the first week of September there were 100 Liberty ships waiting to unload. The very success of the Allied advance further aggravated the supply situation. The logisticians planned for the Seine to be reached on D plus 90. On the 4th of September, or not quite D plus 90, there were sixteen divisions 150 miles past the Seine. In mid-September, US forces closed on Aachen, some 200 miles past the Seine, which was the D plus 330 phase line. Each of these divisions required 650 tons a day to sustain operations. The problems in beach and port clearance, compounded by the inadequacy of line haul (despite the Red Ball Express) simply overcame the capability of the logistics structure to support the Allied advance.²

In the first week of September, the 7th AD, leading Patton's 3rd Army, ran out of fuel at Verdun. But logistics

alone did not derail the Allied train. The very success of the campaign following COBRA and the ANVIL-DRAGOON operations in August revealed an insufficiency of troops which, by October 1944, reached crisis proportions. The aggregate strength in the European theater reached fifty-four divisions on the Continent and six staging in the United Kingdom. Upon reaching the German border, the Allied armies established a line which stretched nearly 500 miles from the banks of the Rhine in the north to the Swiss border in the south. The numbers meant, in Eisenhower's words, that he could man each ten miles of the line with "less than one division."³ Moreover, the manpower pool available to the planners had already peaked. Thus, there were too few divisions and too few infantry replacements.⁴

Further complicating matters, the Allies were of two minds on how to finish the Germans. Montgomery and Bradley each favored a single thrust as long as it occurred in his respective sector. Eisenhower had to balance the logistical realities and national interests of both Britain and the United States against operational necessity. Logistics and national pride argued for a sharing of the resources and, thus, an advance on a broad front. Furthermore, Montgomery and Bradley favored advancing on an axis which would be narrow and susceptible to being pinched off at the base.

In the end, Eisenhower plotted the middle course, shifting supplies from one Army Group to another as opportunity or politics dictated. He acquiesced to

Montgomery's MARKET-GARDEN operation which kicked off on 17 September 1944. Within days MARKET-GARDEN stalled. Bradley's armies also ground to a halt in mid-September. Major General Leonard T. Gerow's V Corps arrived at the West Wall on the heels of the retreating Germans, but lacked the strength to penetrate the German defenses. Gerow, who left V Corps on 18 September to testify at the Pearl Harbor investigation, still felt confident enough to confide to his subordinates that, "It is probable the war with Germany will be over before I am released to return to V Corps."⁵

Gerow made his prediction without consulting the Germans who were in the process of achieving what they called the "miracle in the west." Though the Germans had been mauled in the campaign in France, they had, in fact, won the race for the West Wall. Equally important, they had done so with much of their fighting force and nearly all of their tactical headquarters intact. Thus, in September, they were able to smite Montgomery at Arnhem, block 1st Army in the Ardennes, and halt Patton at Metz. In the south, Lieutenant General Jacob L. Devers' 6th Army group had cleared southern France of the Germans, but still had to cope with a German bridgehead at Colmar. On 20 October, Eisenhower correctly concluded that "there is a lot of suffering and sacrificing for thousands of Americans and their allies before the thing is finally over."⁶

The war in the west settled into a war of attrition while the Allies attempted to build up adequate combat power

to breach the Rhine and continue the war of movement. This phase of the fighting witnessed the terrible battles of the Huertgen forests which chewed up American divisions in the north. Patton's army fought a difficult siege against Metz which finally fell in November. Devers continued to struggle with the Germans in the Colmar pocket. After hard fighting, Montgomery cleared the estuary before Antwerp at the end of November. But, the Allies did not expect to renew the general offensive until the middle of December. It would take that long to build up adequate supplies and rebuild their infantry strength. In the meantime, Eisenhower had to take risks in some sectors in order to garner his strength in other, more critical, sectors of the line.⁷

Eisenhower and Bradley took such a risk in the Ardennes. The risk seemed justified because the difficult terrain favored the defender and neither man believed the Germans had the capability to launch a major counteroffensive. Furthermore, the Germans seemed content to remain passive in the Ardennes. Both sides apparently regarded the Ardennes as a good place to train new formations and rest tired units. The Ardennes became what Charles B. McDonald, in The Siegfried Line Campaign, termed a combination "nursery and old folks home."⁸ On 16 December, Major General Troy H. Middleton's VIII Corps defended ninety miles of rugged and wooded terrain in the Ardennes sector with part of four divisions and one cavalry group of two squadrons. Gerow's V Corps, like

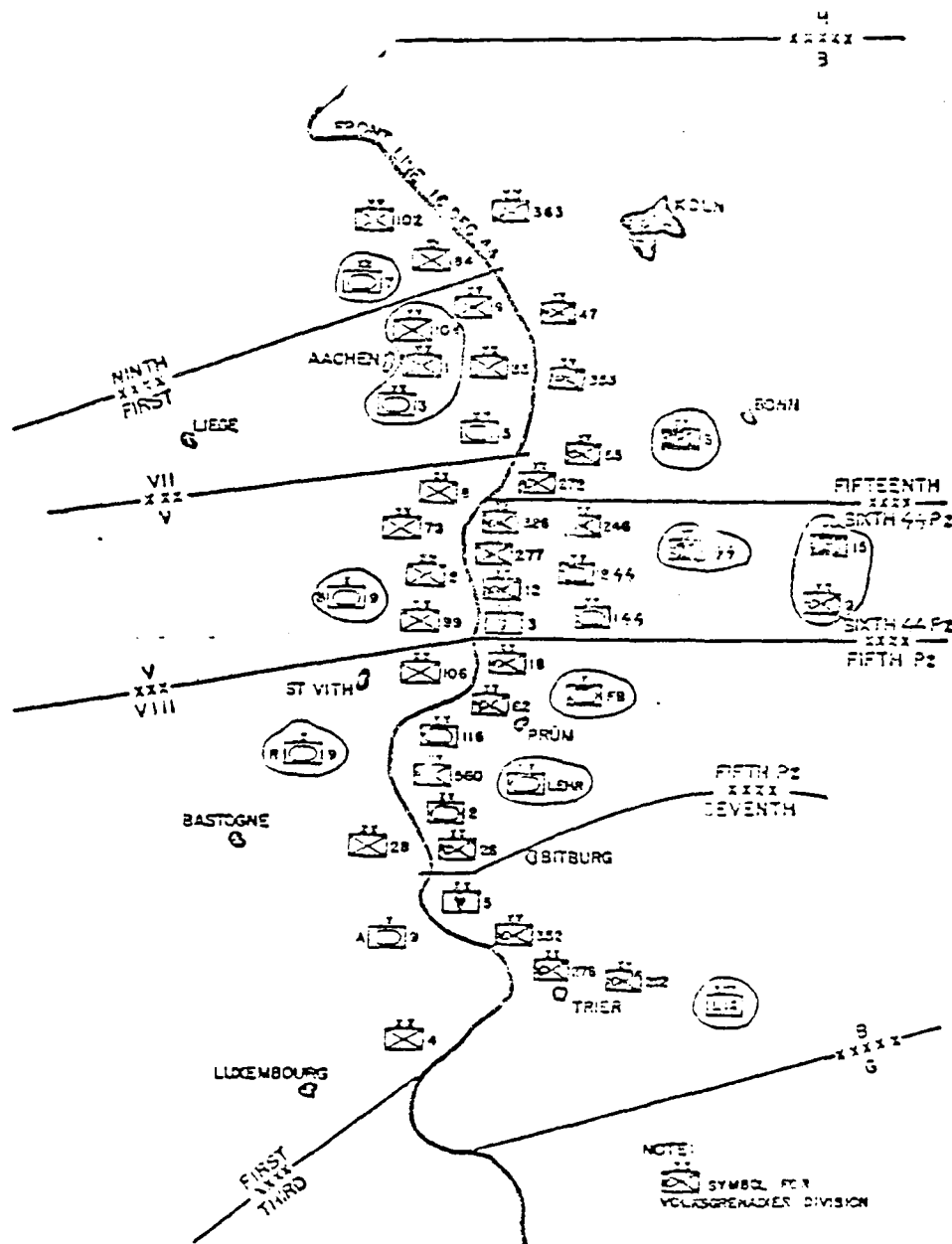
VIII Corps assigned to Lieutenant General Courtney H. Hodges' 1st Army, defended the northernmost part of the Ardennes on Middleton's left. The Luxembourg-French border formed Middleton's boundary with 3rd Army.⁹

The trace of VIII Corps' main line of resistance extended from the Losheim Gap through the Schnee Eifel and all the way south to the Luxembourg border. Of Middleton's four divisions, the 4th and the 28th had been mauled in the Huertgen forest. The remaining two were the untested 106th ID and the 9th AD. The 14th Cavalry Group, which maintained a tenuous link with V Corps, screened the Losheim Gap in the north. The 106th, which controlled the 14th Cavalry Group, defended the Schnee Eifel from the Losheim Gap to the German town of Lutzmankampen roughly sixteen miles south of the Gap. The 28th ID extended the line on the right of the 106th with one combat command of the 9th AD on its right. The 4th ID defended the southernmost sector of the Corps front. Middleton retained one combat command of the 9th AD in reserve. Brigadier General William M. Hoge had the remaining combat command in Faymonville, Belgium, just to the rear of Gerow's southernmost division, the 99th ID. Hoge's command, assigned to V Corps, had the mission of supporting a V Corps attack scheduled to begin on 16 December. Though Middleton was not content with these arrangements, they represented the best he could do with what he had. Bradley considered the risk "negligible" because he believed Generalfeldmarschall Gerd von Rundstedt,

Commander in Chief West, could not undertake a major offensive (See Map 1).¹⁰

Bradley's risk came to haunt him in December 1944 because in reality Hitler, not von Rundstedt, commanded in the west. As early as the summer of 1944, Hitler had a great counteroffensive in mind, not a passive defense of the West Wall. The Mortain counterattack in August merely represented Hitler's first attempt to undo the Allies, not his last. Hitler took stern measures to increase combatant strength. First, he named Heinrich Himmler as chief of the Replacement Army. Secondly, he ordered Reich Minister Joseph Goebbels to comb the remnants of German manpower from protected industries, medical deferments, and superfluous air force and naval units. Accordingly, in the Fall of 1944, Goebbels began mobilizing both the remaining manpower in the Reich and its industry to create the reserve necessary for Hitler's plan. He garnered the needed resources by great effort on the home front and great sacrifice by the combatant units at the front, which were already starved for replacements of men and equipment.¹¹

In September, Hitler began to plan the operation which he envisioned would begin on 1 November 1944. Specifically, he ordered Goebbels to provide a strategic reserve of twenty-five divisions. On 13 September, Hitler directed that the SS divisions be withdrawn from the Western Front to the Cologne region where they would be assigned to the 6th Panzer Army to refit. Hitler then specified that the



MAP 1: Troop Dispositions, 16 DEC 1944 (Reproduced from US Army Armor School Study, Battle at St. Vith.)

offensive would occur in the Ardennes and that the objective would be Antwerp.¹²

Hitler's motives for the counteroffensive have been the subject of considerable speculation. Apparently, he hoped to destroy the British armies northeast of Antwerp. If successful, the seizure of Antwerp and the destruction of British armies might force Britain out of the war. Aiming the attack along the boundary between the American and British armies lends credence to this interpretation. As a minimum, a successful attack on Antwerp would bag the Allied troops north of the penetration and would wrest the initiative from Eisenhower.¹³ This accomplished, Hitler might then be able to shift his effort to the east and stop the Russians who were on the verge of entering the Reich.

The Ardennes commended itself to Hitler because the terrain was such that a major offensive would seem unlikely to the Allies which would aid the Wehrmacht in achieving surprise. The Ardennes also formed the general boundary between the British and the Americans. Attacking at the boundary between the two major Allied groups of armies would make it difficult for them to achieve the close cooperation necessary during a crisis. Once through the Ardennes the Germans would have decent terrain on their northwesterly advance to Antwerp. The weather in the Ardennes region would also help shield the German advance from Allied airpower. Finally, the weakness of the Allied defenses in the Ardennes would facilitate the penetration.¹⁴

The German plan went through several iterations during the Fall. Delays were imposed because of exigencies on the Front and difficulties in concentrating troops. Some delay also occurred because fewer troops could be found than desired. Hitler also met with limited opposition from his generals who felt the plan was too bold. In the end, Hitler had his way and the offensive kicked off on 16 December 1944. Generalfeldmarschall Model, commanding Army Group B, had overall responsibility for the Ardennes campaign. Model directed four armies including 15th Army in the north, 6th and 5th Panzer Armies in the center, and 7th Army in the south. Though 15th Army originally had the mission of enveloping from the north, it played no role in the offensive.

The three assault armies fielded seven panzer divisions, ten volks grenadier (infantry) divisions, and one parachute division. The German high command also sent Skorzeny's 150th Panzer Brigade, using American equipment and uniforms, and some 1,000 paratroopers to create chaos in the American rear. Army Group B retained a reserve of one panzer division, two panzer grenadier (motorized infantry) divisions, two volks grenadier divisions, and the two brigades of the Fuhrer Escort. The Escort Brigades were nearly division-sized units -- one of infantry and one of armor. The Germans also massed an impressive amount of artillery to support the attack.¹⁵ The four divisions

of Middleton's VIII Corps and the 99th of Gerow's V Corps constituted the target for this impressive array.

This study is not concerned with the entire scope of the counteroffensive, but particularly with the efforts of the 5th Panzer Army commanded by General der Panzertruppen Hasso von Manteuffel and with parts of the 6th Panzer Army commanded by Generaloberst der Waffen SS Sepp Dietrich. That context is further narrowed to the sector of VIII Corps defended by the newly arrived 106th Division and the 14th Cavalry Group. It is against these German forces, and in concert with the remnants of the VIII Corps units in this sector, that the 7th AD played its role. Accordingly, some analysis of the terrain and troops involved is required.

For the purposes of this study, the St. Vith sector is considered to be that area bounded by Malmedy in the northeast, Burg Reuland in the southeast, Houffalize in the southwest, and Manhay in the northwest (See Map 2). This sector lies at the northeast edge of the Ardennes highland and is densely forested primarily by coniferous trees. The Schnee Eifel and the German frontier lie along the eastern edge. The Schnee Eifel is a spine of hills running generally south to north. Though the highest elevation in the area is 560 meters, the slopes of the hills are steep and the entire area is accurately characterized as rugged.

There are three important rivers in the sector. The Our, in the east, which is generally not fordable; and the Salm, in the center, which can be forded and flows into the

third important stream, the Ambleve which, like the Our, must be bridged. There are also numerous smaller streams throughout. The road net is reasonably good, but few roads are hard-surfaced. Even the hard-surfaced roads are difficult to navigate because, as Manteuffel observed, they "had many steep slopes and sharp, hairpin curves."¹⁶ There are also many dirt tracks and logging trails in the area; however, the soft soil kept the armor and wheeled traffic road-bound during much of the period under discussion.¹⁷

There were also a good number of towns in the region, most of which lay at crossroads. St. Vith became important for precisely that reason. The town lies in a bowl with the Schnee Eifel and the Our River to the east. On the west is a ridge and further to the west the Salm River. Three very important roads lead generally west out of St. Vith. These roads along with a westward railroad were critical to the advance of both 5th and 6th Panzer Armies.¹⁸

The winter weather in the region is abominable. During the fighting, the weather generally favored the Germans because it prevented the Americans from employing their vast superiority in fighter/bombers. Snow, freezing rain, and low temperatures are the norm in December and January. The weather during the battle was marked by all of these things. For most of the time during 16 December through 23 January, the temperatures remained near freezing and the visibility was limited to under a mile.¹⁹ In the third week of

January, when the 7th AD retook St. Vith, there was as much as two feet of snow on the ground.

A short analysis of the composition and general qualities of the troop units which fought in the St. Vith sector will complete the strategic and tactical pictures. Obviously, six years of war had effected both the quality and organization of German units. The German units which fought in the St. Vith sector were still quite capable, but they were not uniform in quality and fell into three categories. Generally, the volks grenadier divisions comprised the lowest category, the panzer divisions the middle, and SS units and other elite formations, such as the two Fuhrer Escort Brigades, the highest category.

The volks grenadier divisions represented part of the final effort to mobilize German society to prosecute the war effort. There were, therefore, considerable variations in the quality of individual units based on the availability of equipment and their access to the recruiting pool. The 18th and 62nd VGD, which surrounded two regiments of the 106th, reflect many of the difficulties the Germans experienced in raising the strategic reserve needed for the Ardennes counteroffensive. More than half of the 11,000 soldiers of the 18th VGD began their careers as airmen or sailors and, thus, had little practical experience as infantrymen. The province of Silesia provided the drafts to build the 62nd VGD on a cadre of the survivors of the 62nd ID which the Soviets had destroyed in Bessarabia. The Silesian

drafts, which came primarily from previously exempted trades, inherited the customs, traditions, and survivors of the old 62nd. Neither of these divisions, like most of their kind, had very much time to train. The 18th did have the benefit of occupying the line opposite the 106th and its predecessor, the 2nd. The 62nd arrived in the line just in time to participate in the great moment after a few weeks training.²⁰

The Wehrmacht table of organization reflected the shortage of equipment. The "standard" VGD had two infantry regiments and an artillery regiment. Each also fielded an anti-tank battalion and reconnaissance battalion. The infantry regiments moved on foot and horses served as the prime movers in the artillery regiment. Transport in these divisions was austere, to say the least. Most of the VGDs did have experienced leadership and their soldiers were not without hope. In fact, morale in these units was good. From the perspective of four decades this seems surprising. According to Oberstleutenant Dietrich Moll of the 18th VGD, the soldiers of the 18th VGD "still believed that the war might have a favorable outcome" for Germany.²¹

During the Bulge, the 7th AD also fought against the 116th Panzer Division of Manteuffel's 5th Panzer Army. Right until the end of the war, the panzers attracted sufficient volunteers to man those divisions. Obviously, this conveyed some advantages to the panzer formations, including the 116th. The 116th had seventy of its author-

ized strength of 103 tanks when the battle began. The tanks operated as part of a two-battalion regiment. The 116th also had two infantry regiments of two battalions each and an artillery regiment. The Division fielded an anti-tank battalion of thirteen self-propelled anti-tank guns. Reconnaissance and other combat support and service support assets completed its strength.²²

Three SS panzer divisions and the panzer version of the Fuhrer Escort Brigades also tilted with the 7th AD. As Hitler's favorites, these formations enjoyed the benefits of his interest. By comparison to either the VGDs or the panzer divisions, they were lavishly equipped. The SS units enjoyed the advantages of being equipped at 90% strength. Thus, the 1st SS Panzer Division, for example, had more than 100 tanks on 16 December 1944. The Fuhrer Escort Brigade fielded seventy tanks and self-propelled guns which made it as strong as one of Manteuffel's legitimate panzer divisions. The Brigade's three infantry battalions included many veterans of the excellent Gross Deutschland Division.²³ The SS units and the escort brigades also enjoyed high morale as a consequence of their privileged status.

Corps and Army combat and service support units comprised the remainder of the German units in the St. Vith sector. Among these were an assault gun brigade of some forty self-propelled guns and various independent assault gun companies. The Germans also had adequate amounts of

artillery. The 5th Panzer Army fielded 596 tubes of artillery in its divisional, corps and army units. However, the artillery was mostly horse-drawn. Rations remained at adequate levels throughout the battle. There were some problems with fuel and ammunition, but the Germans did not depend on captured US stocks to sustain the battle. Despite variations in quality, the units which confronted the American units in the St. Vith sector retained significant combat power.²⁴

The American units also varied in organization and quality. The 7th AD would eventually control elements of the 9th AD, 28th ID, 106th ID, 82nd Airborne, 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment (PIR), 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion (PIB), and various corps and army units. All of these units began the battle at nearly full strength and with virtually all of their authorized equipment. The 7th began the campaign with very close to its authorized tank strength of 186 tanks. In addition to three tank battalions, the 7th also boasted three armored infantry battalions of 1,000 men each who rode on halftracks, one squadron of mechanized cavalry, and three self-propelled howitzer battalions. Combat Command B (CCB) of the 9th AD, which participated in the defense of St. Vith, brought with it one tank battalion, one armored infantry battalion and one armored artillery battalion. Unlike the 7th, however, the 9th AD was new to combat. The 106th's 424th Infantry Regiment, the 28th's 112th Regimental Combat Team (RCT), and the parachute

units all moved on foot. The supporting artillery of all of these units was towed. The artillery battalions, which supported the parachute units, fielded 75mm howitzers instead of the 105s which were standard in the armored and infantry divisions.²⁵

Few of the American units which fought in the St. Vith sector with the 7th AD had made a great name for itself prior to the Bulge. The 7th came ashore in Normandy on 14 August and fought as part of Patton's 3rd Army until 24 September when it moved north to 1st Army. From September through November, the Division fought in Holland as part of 1st Army and later as part of the British 2nd Army. In November, after seeing hard fighting against the 9th and 15th Panzer Divisions, the 7th AD joined 9th Army. Throughout November and part of December, the 7th remained in a rest area or in reserve waiting for the planned Roer offensive. On 1 November 1944, Brigadier General Robert W. Hasbrouck assumed command of the Division. His replacement in CCB was COL Bruce C. Clarke who pinned his stars on in early December. The 7th AD had accumulated considerable experience since August 1944, but its two senior officers had not commanded their respective commands in combat.²⁶

None of the senior officers of the 106th had any recent combat experience. Major General Allan W. Jones joined the 106th as its commander soon after it activated in March 1944. The 106th had suffered the turmoil of losing more than half of its infantrymen to meet the ravenous demands

of the infantry replacement depots. Accordingly, it deployed to the United Kingdom in October and November without having retrained as a division. The 106th then moved on to France on 1 December. On 10 December 1944 the 106th relieved the 2nd ID in the Schnee Eifel weapon for weapon, position for position. It did so without all of its equipment and almost no ammunition after a non-stop cold, wet ride across France. On its southern flank, the 106th tied in with the 28th ID's 112th Infantry Regiment.²⁷

The 112th Infantry Regiment, like the rest of the 28th ID, had suffered during the battle of Schmidt in November 1944. The 112th had absorbed a great number of replacements since then, but had few opportunities to train its units. Still, COL Gustin M. Nelson, who commanded the regiment, felt that he had ample time to integrate the replacements and noted that "no one could ask for better material to work with."²⁸ The 517th PIR had no great experience, but it had weathered the tough training all of the airborne units experienced and enjoyed high morale. The 508th PIR and the 509th PIB were combat-tested units.²⁹ CCB 9th AD had been in the St. Vith sector since October 1944. During that time CCB grew more confident with each day's experience, but it had not yet faced the challenge of a big fight.³⁰

All of these units would soon have the opportunity to fight in a major battle. For General Jones and the 106th,

the challenge would begin on 16 December. Jones and his "Golden Lions" would have to face General der Artillerie Walter Lucht's LXVI Corps, composed of the 18th and 62nd VGDs, and part of 6th Panzer Army's 1st SS Panzer Division. General Jones was not happy with his dispositions. To defend his front, which extended from Lanzerath in the Losheim Gap to Lutzmankampen in the south, Jones had his nine infantry battalions and two cavalry squadrons of the attached 14th Cavalry Group. One squadron, the 18th, manned a series of outposts in the gap while the other occupied reserve positions in the rear. The cavalry maintained contact with the 99th ID by mounted patrol and land line. Two of Jones' regiments, the 422nd and the 423rd, occupied parts of the Siegfried Line in the Schnee Eifel. The remaining regiment, the 424th, extended the line south to tie in with 112th.³¹

Across the line, Lucht had deployed his two vols grenadier divisions to envelop the two regiments in the Schnee Eifel. Lucht, who based his plans on very good intelligence, hoped to pinch off the units in the Schnee Eifel and take St. Vith on 17 December. Once St. Vith fell, the road net in the St. Vith sector could be used to move Manteuffel's troops and equipment west. By way of this miniature Cannae, the Germans hoped to seize St. Vith unopposed. Just north of the Losheim Gap, 6th Panzer Army intended to push through the 99th ID and on to the west.³²

When the German attack came, however, the 7th AD entered the St. Vith sector just in time to deny the town to Lucht's troops. The "Lucky Seventh's" accomplishments proved critical to 1st Army which had responsibility for the Ardennes. The 7th bought time for Eisenhower, Bradley, and Hodges to respond and, thus, were instrumental in assuring eventual victory in the battle which began in what historian Robert Merriam has called "Dark December". The Division and its leadership ably demonstrated initiative, agility, depth and synchronization in miserable conditions while fighting a more numerous enemy. The officer who drafted the Division Artillery after action report might be forgiven for observing on 1 January 1945, "that a very generous niche in the military 'hall of fame' was carved by the roaring artillery, rumbling tanks and unflinching doughboys of the 'Lucky Seventh'."³³

But, on the morning of 16 December, the attention of the 7th AD was not on the Ardennes or the military "hall of fame." The Division had been training for a month in the vicinity of Heerlen, in Holland, and Geilenkirchen, in Germany, for an offensive to the northeast, as part of the 9th Army's XIII Corps. In fact, the Lucky Seventh was awaiting the capture of the Roer Dams so that it could attack without fear of flooded fields. However, at 1730, on the afternoon of 16 December, XIII Corps alerted the 7th for an administrative march to assembly areas around Vielsalm, Belgium, where they would come under the orders of Middle-

ton's VIII Corps. Little more was known of the German attack. General Hasbrouck assumed his division would conduct an attack after its arrival. Nonetheless, he ordered his CCB Commander, Brigadier General Bruce C. Clarke, to Bastogne to meet with Middleton. Clarke departed that evening with his S-3 in tow to learn how Middleton intended to employ the Division. Hasbrouck planned to follow with the Division early on 17 December.³⁴

ENDNOTES: Chapter 1

¹Stephen E. Ambrose, The Supreme Commander: The War Years of General Dwight D. Eisenhower (New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1969), p. 464. See also, Omar N. Bradley and Clay Blair, A General's Life (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), pp. 276-288.

²Roland G. Ruppenthal, Logistical Support of the Armies: September 1944 - May 1945, 2 Vols., (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1958), pp. 2: 2-20, 2: 134-137, 2: 161-165.

³Dwight D. Eisenhower, Crusade in Europe (New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1948), p. 322.

⁴Ibid., pp. 333-335.

⁵Charles B. MacDonald, The Siegfried Line Campaign (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1963), p. 65. See also, Ambrose, Supreme Commander, pp. 504-536, on Eisenhower's eventual decision to continue the broad front strategy.

⁶Ambrose, Supreme Commander, p. 539.

⁷For Eisenhower's own analysis of these events, see Eisenhower, Crusade, pp. 331-333.

⁸MacDonald, Siegfried, p. 613.

⁹Cole, The Ardennes, pp. 53-56.

¹⁰Ibid. See also, Bradley, General's Life, p. 353. Bradley's estimate of the risk involved can be found at pp. 350-354.

¹¹Cole, The Ardennes, pp. 1-9; 33-36. Cole's account of the creation of the German operational reserve is complete and concise. See also, Robert E. Merriam, Dark December (Chicago: Ziff-Davis, 1947), pp. 8-11; and Major Percy E. Schramm, The Preparations for the German Offensive in the Ardennes (Sep to 16 Dec 1944) EUCOM MS# A-862. Regarding the German economic situation see, Charles V. von Luetichau, "The Ardennes Offensive: Germany's Situation in the Fall of 1944, Part 2: The Economic Situation," Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, March, 1953.

¹²Cole, The Ardennes, pp. 13-18; 28-33.

¹³Ibid., pp. 28-33.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 16-18.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 34-36. See also, General der Panzertruppen Hasso von Manteuffel, Fifth Panzer Army: Ardennes Offensive, EUCOM MS# B-151. At 148 pages, Manteuffel's manuscript is the most complete German account of the plan and of the forces which attempted this execution.

¹⁶Charles B. MacDonald, "The Neglected Ardennes," Military Review, April 1963, pp. 74-89. See also, Major Paul J. St. Laurent, et. al., "The Battle of St. Vith: Defense and Withdrawal of Encircled Forces," unpublished Staff Battle Analysis, May 1984. The author of this study wrote much of that analysis. Not surprisingly, there is some similarity between part of the analysis and this thesis. Finally, see Manteuffel, MS# B-151, p. 112.

¹⁷Marvin D. Kays, "Weather Effects During the Battle of the Bulge and the Normandy Invasion," Atmospheric Sciences Laboratory, 1982, pp. 8-9.

¹⁸St. Laurent, St. Vith, pp. 17-18.

¹⁹Kays, "Weather," pp. 19-21.

²⁰On the 62nd VGD see, Generalmajor Friedrich Kittel, 62d Volks Grenadier Division (16 Dec 1944 - 27 Jan 1945), EUCOM MS# B-028. See also, Friedrich Kittel, "A New 62d Inf. Div. -- The 62d VGD," translated from Alte Kammeraden, November 1958, in the Charles B. MacDonald Papers at the US Army Military History Institute. On the 13th VGD see, Oberstleutnant Dietrich Moll, 18th Volks Grenadier Division (1 Sep 1944 - 25 Jan 1945), EUCOM MS# B-688. Volks Grenadier Division is abbreviated as VGD.

²¹Moll, 18th VGD, p. 19.

²²Kenneth Macksey, Panzer Division: The Mailed Fist (New York: Ballantine Books, 1968), p. 126. See also, Manteuffel, MS# B-151, pp. 138-139; 146-147, re: his assessment of the panzer divisions of his Army and the SS divisions of 6th Panzer Army. Finally see, Jean Paul Pallud, Battle of the Bulge: Then and Now (London: After the Battle, 1984). Pallud's work on the German order of battle is the best of its kind. His work will provide the curious with as good a reckoning of the numbers of tanks and fighting vehicles as can be found.

²³Pallud, Then and Now, pp. 34-35. See also, Generalmajor Siegfried von Waldenburg, Commitment of the 116th Panzer Division in the Ardennes (16-26 Dec 1944), EUCOM MS# A-873, pp. 1-5.

²⁴Manteuffel, MS# B-151. His comments on supply are scattered throughout the MS. The horsedrawn artillery was a particular sore spot for Manteuffel. See also, Pallud, Then and Now, p. 52.

²⁵Simon Forty, American Armor (Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1981), and George Forty, US Army Handbook: 1939-1945 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1979) are both useful on the organization of US formations. Each infantry regiment included three battalions of infantry with a strength of over 3,000 men. Regimental combat teams were usually formed by adding an artillery battalion and a tank-destroyer company. Airborne regiments fielded about 1,000 fewer soldiers than standard infantry regiments. The 7th AD had an authorized strength of 10,937 officers and men. See, Appendix III on US organization.

²⁶Seventh Armored Division Association, The Lucky Seventh (Dallas, TX: Taylor Publishing Co., 1982), p. 25. See also, Interview with Major General Robert W. Hasbrouck, Washington D.C., 20 August 1984.

²⁷R. E. Dupuy, St. Vith: Lion in the Way (Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1949), pp. 5-9.

²⁸Combat interview with Colonel Gustin M. Nelson, Montfaucon, France, 14 January 1945.

²⁹See, Gerard D. Devlin, Paratrooper! (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979). The 517th PIR deployed to Italy in May 1944, where it saw action in the summer. Subsequently, the 517th fought in Normandy. Two of its battalion commanders, LTC Melvin Zais and LTC Richard J. Seitz, retired as General officers. Zais retired as a full General and Seitz as a Lt. General, both in 1976. The 508th had, of course, participated in the Sicily, Normandy and Arnhem operations. The 509th had first seen combat in North Africa.

³⁰CPT Charles Gillett, "History of the 9th Armored Division," unpublished manuscript dated 3 Sept 1945, located in the Major General John William Leonard Papers at the US Army Military History Institute.

³¹Dupuy, Lion, pp. 11-15. The VIII Corps had fire support from three field artillery groups which controlled nine artillery battalions. Five of these battalions were 155 towed howitzers. Two had 8" guns and two had 4.5" guns. The 333rd FA Group and the 174th FA Group were physically located well forward in the 106th's sector. See, LTC Joseph R. Reeves, "Artillery in the Ardennes," Field Artillery Journal, Vol. 36, March 1946, pp. 138-184. Because of the extent of his frontage, Jones retained only the 2nd Battalion, 423rd Infantry as a division reserve. Dupuy says that Jones believed he also had a string on one battalion of the 424th. See, Dupuy, p. 14.

³²Cole, The Ardennes, pp. 142-151.

³³7th AD Div Arty AAR, December 1944, p. 6.

³⁴Hasbrouck interview.

Chapter 2

SILESIA IS DEFENDED IN THE WEST

"To stop the advance of the 62nd VGD, the enemy, in skillful operations, made use of tanks, anti-tank units and engineers. They were brave blokes whose resistance could only be broken by concentrated fire."

Generalmajor Friedrich Kittel, CG 62nd VGD,
on the defense of St. Vith

The Germans believed that their success in the December counteroffensive depended on obtaining surprise. This they sought to achieve by their selection of the Ardennes as the arena, by deceiving the Allies as to their intentions and capabilities, and by their timing of the attack. They were highly successful. Partly because the Ardennes did not commend itself to large mechanized operations, the German deception and security plans succeeded beyond what seems plausible in retrospect. Denied the advantage of hindsight, the Allies bought the German portrayal of defensive concentrations to avert their planned attack on Cologne because it fit their assessment of German capabilities and intentions. Additionally, airtight German operational security protected information about the planned offensive from the Allies. Frontline US units did obtain some intelligence indicating an attack, but American analysts dismissed that evidence. Finally, the timing of the attack served the Germans well.¹

German analysis of American habits in Europe suggested that an attack in the early morning hours in the Ardennes would achieve surprise. Manteuffel observed that from sun-

rise to sunset the Americans patrolled aggressively, but as the evening wore on the Americans became less alert. After midnight and before sunrise the Americans huddled in their holes. The Americans' habits would not only aid 5th Panzer Army in achieving surprise, but also in achieving success. According to the chief of staff of 5th Panzer Army, this was because "night attack requires less skill, but higher morale than combat by day. It offers success, therefore, for troops who have not had the proper training."²

The 18th VGD, whose soldiers had little experience, trained for night combat by reconnoitering the 106th positions by night. Oberstleutnant Moll, operations officer of that division, noted with some disdain that the 106th had a "strong aversion to night fighting."³ LT Robert R. Wessels' assessment of the habits of his unit, 1st Battalion 422nd Infantry, bears Moll out. Wessels reported that his battalion patrolled "only in the daytime."⁴

Armed with accurate intelligence of the 106th's positions, the Germans attacked before dawn on 16 December. The last of the German assault units, the 62nd VGD, moved into the line on the night of 15 December. In November the 62nd had come west from Silesia by train. The soldiers of the 62nd, not quite sure why they had not remained in Silesia where they could defend their homeland against the Russians, nevertheless got in the spirit of things by chalking slogans on the sides of their troop train. The

one which captured their commanding general's attention read, "Silesia is defended in the West, too."⁵

The soldiers of the 62nd and their colleagues in the 5th and 6th Panzer Army moved out at 0400 on 16 December intending to infiltrate the American positions while their artillery preparations fell at 0530.

The Americans' first indications of trouble came when troops of the 18th VGD and the 3rd Parachute Division overran or surrounded outposts of the 14th Cavalry Group (CAV). The Germans paralyzed the 106th by attacking the Division's command and control apparatus. Thanks to the intensive patrolling of the 18th VGD, the Germans knew the locations of regimental and battalion command posts and attacked them with effective artillery barrages. Between accurate artillery and Germans armed with wire cutters, the 106th's cable communications failed quickly. The Germans also conducted sweep jamming of the Division frequencies.⁶ By mid-morning, General Jones had difficulty communicating. The 18th's ground attacks, aided by their attack on the 106th's command and control, obtained good results.

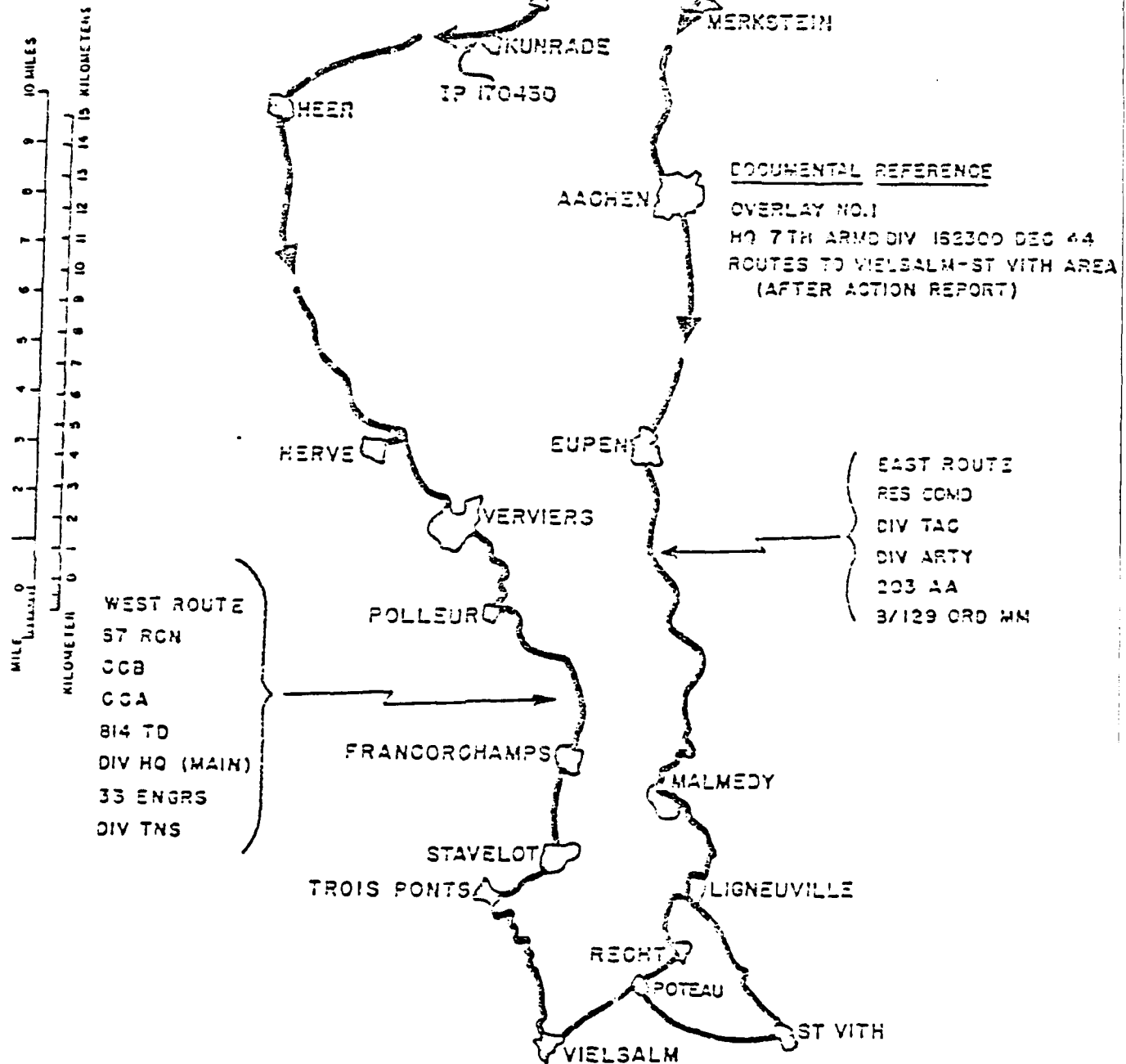
In the south, the 62nd VGD hurled itself on the 424th Infantry Regiment. Though the 424th managed to hold most of its positions, it lost contact with the 423rd on its left and the 28th ID's 112th on its right. In the Schnee Eifel, the Germans had nearly surrounded the 422nd and 423rd. The 18th VGD and elements of the 6th Panzer Army routed the 14th CAV from the Losheim Gap. Flanked by the

18th VGD and exposed by the 14th CAV's withdrawal from the Gap, the artillery battalions supporting the two regiments in the Schnee Eifel fought German infantry head on. By the end of the first day the Germans had General Jones and his "Golden Lions" by the throat.⁷

The tremors of the attack in the Ardennes reached Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces (SHAEF) at Versailles on the first day. Eisenhower reacted to the news decisively. After consulting with Bradley, who happened to be at Versailles, Eisenhower directed him to send 7th AD of Simpson's 9th Army, and 10th AD of Patton's 3rd Army to Middleton's VIII Corps. Within hours, Middleton received word that the two armor divisions had orders to join his corps. That evening BG Hasbrouck ordered his CCB commander, BG Clarke, south to meet with Middleton. When Clarke arrived at VIII Corps Headquarters at 0300 on 17 December, Middleton told him to get some sleep and go to St. Vith in the morning to see how he could help Jones and the 106th.⁸

Hasbrouck and the 7th started on their sixty-five mile march south at 0430 on 17 December, planning to occupy assembly areas in Vielsalm about fourteen miles west of St. Vith. The Division's two columns moved south in administrative march order. Having been assured by VIII Corps there was no need to integrate the artillery, it followed CCR on the easternmost of the two routes assigned to the Division (See Map 3). This route would take the

ROUTES TO
VIELSALM-ST VITH AREA
7TH ARMD DIV
17 DEC 44



MAP 3: 7th AD Routes (Reproduced from US Army School Study, Battle at St. Vith.)

artillery through Malmedy, Belgium, in the mid-afternoon. The march went well enough at first and the troops passed the time "joking and enjoying the scenery."⁹

As the 7th AD moved south the situation in the 106th's sector worsened. During the night the Germans had completed the encirclement of the 422nd and 423rd Regiments on the Schnee Eifel. Worse still, from the 7th's point of view, the 14th CAV had ceased to exist as a cohesive fighting force. Soundly thrashed by a combination of paratroopers, SS tankers and the 18th VGD, the 14th CAV disintegrated and fled southwest towards Vielsalm. Obersturmbannfuhrer Jochem Peiper's Kampfgruppe, built on his panzer regiment of the 1st SS Panzer Division, roared through the area vacated by the cavalry and headed west. Peiper cut the 7th's routes at Malmedy in the early afternoon and at Stavelot in the evening. On both occasions Peiper narrowly missed the march serials of Hasbrouck's Combat Commands. The Division Artillery was not as lucky. At Malmedy the artillery turned west hoping to get south via Stavelot, but ran into Peiper instead. The 203rd Anti-aircraft Artillery Battalion (AAA) saved the artillery by engaging Peiper's leading tanks with direct fire. After escaping Peiper, the artillery finally reached Vielsalm on 18 December.¹⁰

Though the combat elements eluded Peiper, they were unable to avoid the rabble of Americans fleeing the scene. It seemed everyone was moving west. Six battalions of Corps Artillery headed west under orders, if not under

control. Intermingled with them, the cavalry streamed south and west along with corps and army units of all descriptions. The S-3 of the 38th Armored Infantry Battalion (AIB), MAJ Donald P. Boyer, Jr., described what he saw as "a case of every dog for himself; it was a retreat, a rout...it wasn't orderly; it wasn't military; it wasn't a pretty sight--we were seeing American soldiers running away."¹¹ It took the Division several hours to move the last fourteen miles from Vielsalm to St. Vith.

While the 7th AD fought its way south, General Jones tried to make some sense of what was happening to his division. On the night of 16 December, Middleton had released CCB 9th AD to Jones and promised that CCB 7th AD would arrive at 0700 on 17 December. General Jones planned to have Brigadier General William Hoge's CCB 9th AD attack towards Winterspelt to restore his right flank. Accordingly, Hoge had moved from Faymonville south through St. Vith the day before and began his attack on 17 December. Clarke arrived, not at 0700 but at 1030, and not with his Combat Command, but with CPT Owen Woodruff, CCB's S-3. Jones' introduction to combat as a division commander had not been pleasant and by the morning of 17 December it was showing. Hoge found him "jittery and nervous."¹² Clarke thought Jones was "out on his feet."¹³ To add to his burden, Jones' son was in the cauldron on the Schnee Eifel. Moreover, Jones had committed his reserve battalion which joined the two regiments already in the bag.

Clarke spent the morning with Jones scraping together such units as they could find, pushing them east of St. Vith to slow the advancing Germans. The 18th VGD, fresh from encircling the Schnee Eifel, arrived within two miles of the town by 1300. Previously, General Jones had assigned responsibility for the defense of St. Vith to LTC Thomas C. Riggs Jr. Riggs had roughly two companies of his 81st Engineer Battalion, about forty soldiers of LTC W. L. Nungesser's 168th Engineer Battalion, one platoon of towed 3" guns of the 820th Tank Destroyer Battalion (TD), and the Division defense platoon.¹⁴ About 1400 that afternoon as the 18th VGD's lead elements approached Riggs' positions near Prumerberg, Jones turned over the defense to Clarke since he had no further troops and Clarke would soon have his Combat Command.

To Clarke, who had just pinned on his first star, it seemed that his career had taken a turn for the worse. Still, Middleton had told him to help Jones. In his words, "I did not need instructions other than those issued by Middleton. My mission, as I saw it, was to stop or slow down the Germans."¹⁵ This he set out to do by grabbing B Troop 87th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron Mechanized (RCN), the first of his units to arrive, and sending it toward Prumerberg to join Riggs. At this point, the newly minted General concluded that, "No tactics applied; I just got units down the road to the east of St. Vith."¹⁶ Clarke shoved units into the lines as they arrived. The

tankers and infantrymen of the 7th moved into battle from their march columns often counterattacking to seize defensible positions.

Further complicating matters, Clarke had no organic artillery support; nor could the 106th ID help as it had one battalion encircled on the Schnee Eifel and one in the south supporting the 424th Infantry Regiment. The 589th Field Artillery Battalion (FA) had escaped the Schnee Eifel, but with only three tubes. The 592nd FA, also from the 106th, was reconstituting on the ridge near Poteau, north and west of St. Vith.¹⁷

LTC Roy U. Clay provided the solution. Clay's 275th Armored Field Artillery Battalion (AFA) had been supporting the 14th CAV. The 275th had fired nearly its whole basic load on 16 December, but as the CAV disintegrated fewer missions had been fired. On 17 December, the Cavalry Group Commander, COL Mark Devine, forbade the 275th to fire because he no longer knew where his units were. Clay had two confrontations with Devine about firing, but was still denied permission to shoot. Finally, Clay turned up at the 106th CP in St. Vith in a huff where he announced he was "tired of being pushed around."¹⁸ The VIII Corps Artillery Liaison Officer told him to support CCB 7th AD.¹⁹ Clay and Clarke both got their wish. Clay got to fire and Clarke got artillery support.

During the course of the day the remaining combat commands of the 7th AD arrived in the St. Vith area. CCA

moved into assembly areas in the vicinity of Beho to the south of St. Vith. North of St. Vith, CCR occupied assembly areas near the town of Recht. Hasbrouck himself first went to VIII Corps for instructions. In Bastogne, he received no "direction at all. What they [Corps] told me about the situation was very sketchy. I finally decided I was wasting time."²⁰ General Hasbrouck then struggled through the dense traffic, reaching St. Vith about 1700. What he saw there worried him.

The 106th was in serious trouble and his own units had no protection on either flank. General Hasbrouck knew nothing about what was happening south of St. Vith, but he knew that he had Germans all along his northern flank. Though he had no orders to hold St. Vith or any clear direction to commit his whole division in the St. Vith sector, he decided that he had to do something about the north flank and quickly. Accordingly, he directed CCR, with one tank battalion, to take Recht and ordered CCA, which had a tank battalion and an armored infantry battalion, to take Poteau on 18 December. CCR moved quickly, but arrived in Recht just after the Germans who rebuffed them sharply. As night fell, Hasbrouck, like Jones, had not enjoyed a great first day as a division commander in combat.²¹

But, the 7th had made a start. CCR clung to positions outside of Recht, trying to get some semblance of a force on the north flank. Clarke's command held an arc east of St. Vith which he described as "tied-in in all areas save

two [both flanks]. These are being corrected at this time." Clarke concluded his report to Hasbrouck by asserting that CCB could "handle the situation."²² Southeast of St. Vith, Hoge's CCB 9th AD held a toe-hold in the Schnee Eifel. In the south, the 424th remained in position facing southeast. Further south, 112th RCT remained intact after a whole day of fighting the 116th Panzer Division and the 560th VGD. Nelson's command delayed, north and west, toward the Americans in the St. Vith sector (See Map 4).²³

The four American Generals spent the night trying to sort things out. The units in and around St. Vith were horribly tangled, which complicated command relationships and helped prevent the formation of a coherent front. LTC Nungesser understated the problem when he observed that "...it was difficult to find the responsible officer for the heterogeneous elements in the line."²⁴ Much moving about occurred during the night, some of it planned and some of it not, as officers at all levels attempted to restore order while fending off German probes. The greatest confusion prevailed in the north where units of the 9th AD, 7th AD, 106th ID and various Corps units had all come together.²⁵ Still, by morning the picture seemed less confused.

On 18 December, rain fell most of the day while the temperature hovered at freezing. Manteuffel, who had planned to take St. Vith on the first day of the attack, kept his LXVI Corps active, probing for weak points.

Lucht's Corps had its problems. The 18th VGD experienced difficulty in getting its horse artillery forward while the 62nd experienced difficulty operating against the 424th and Hoge's CCB. Part of the 62nd's problems stemmed from its lack of experience. The 424th reported repulsing German units (62nd VGD) advancing in tight clumps. The 6th Panzer Army, attempting to avoid congestion in its own area, moved onto roads assigned to Lucht's corps with the result that "heavy congestions took place at several places, where the Commanding General [Lucht] had to take matters in hand personally."²⁶ Because of these problems, on 18 December the Germans never generated sufficient power to seriously threaten the extemporaneous defenses before St. Vith, but they did prevent 7th AD from relieving the two regiments in the Schnee Eifel.

Neither side accomplished its goals for 18 December. Lucht's weak attacks prevented the relief of the trapped units of the 106th. At the same time the 7th frustrated the attempts of the 18th and 62nd VGD to get into St. Vith. Hasbrouck spent the day trying to put together a cohesive defense while cooperating with Jones and Hoge, in the absence of any clear delineation of responsibility. The problem of who was in command made things difficult, but Hasbrouck acted as he saw fit and "gradually assumed command."²⁷ General Hasbrouck chose to anchor his defense on CCB. He ordered CCA to move from Beho to take Poteau on Clarke's left flank. To further stiffen the north

flank, he directed CCR to extend to the west to cover the northern flank of the Division as far as the Vielsalm-Trois Ponts road. Finally, Hasbrouck halted the 14th CAV which was streaming to the rear "in an extremely disorganized state" and ordered it to concentrate at Vielsalm where he proposed to reconstitute it.²⁸

General Hasbrouck ordered these dispositions based on what he knew for sure, which was painfully little. He knew the Germans had reached Stavelot and Malmedy. His own units could testify to these facts. He also knew the Germans had been active on his left flank on 17 December. Hasbrouck concluded that if he failed to get troops up on this flank the Germans could add CCB to the bag at the least. If the Germans attacked southeast from Poteau they would take Clarke in the rear. If they could come south out of Trois Ponts on highway N-23 towards Vielsalm, they would bag the 7th AD and the rest of the 106th, including its attachments.²⁹

One fortuitous event occurred on 17 December which helped Hasbrouck. Five half-tracks and their infantry belonging to B Company 23rd AIB had become separated from their unit during the confusion. 1LT Joe V. "Navaho" Whiteman, executive officer of B/23rd AIB, had these lost sheep in tow. Whiteman arrived in Petit Thier (between Vielsalm and Poteau) after dark on 17 December. Unable to move further against the tide of traffic coming down from Poteau, Whiteman pulled his vehicles off the road

to wait for daylight. The following morning, as "Navaho" and his troops were loading up, "all hell [broke] loose up the valley toward Poteau."³⁰ Some 14th CAV troopers told him the not-surprising news that the Germans had attacked Poteau and were on their way to Petit Thier. Whiteman concluded that "if Jerry was going to be stopped, he'd have to be stopped some place, and it might as well be right there."³¹ By mid-morning, Navaho had added two 105mm assault guns from the 31st Tank Battalion (TB) and other miscellaneous people including a lieutenant from the 424th who had eighty-four soldiers but had run out "of ammunition, out of chow and out of orders."³² Hasbrouck learned of "Task Force Navaho," as Whiteman's effort came to be known, and approved of its actions by radio at 1030 that same morning.³³

Whiteman's initiative gave CCR and CCA some focus for their own efforts. CCA moved out from Beho at 1030, under the command of COL Dwight A. Rosebaum. Rosebaum, who knew of the attack on Poteau, expected to fight a meeting engagement somewhere between St. Vith and Poteau. To his surprise, he encountered no resistance prior to reaching the town. Still, he moved out tank-infantry teams composed of elements of the tank battalion and infantry battalion under his control. As the assault groups neared the town the Germans opened up. After a sharp but short fight CCA got into Poteau at 1330. After withdrawing from Recht, CCR's headquarters moved during the night and cleared Poteau just

before the Germans attacked. CCR's one battalion, the 17th TB, remained in the vicinity of Recht, so CCR had to make do with Whiteman and company until help filtered in during the day.³⁴

None of the units in the growing perimeter had lateral contact with friendly units. In the extreme right rear of the sector, only D/40th TB and some support units remained after CCA moved out of Beho. D Company (17 M-5 Stuart tanks), commanded by CPT Walter J. Hughes, manned roadblocks at Gouvy, Ourthe and Deiffelt. Hughes established his command post in Gouvy and kept seven tanks and the battalion's 81mm mortar platoon with him. There were also engineers, service troops, 350 POWs, and 80,000 rations in Gouvy. Soon they would be joined by LTC Robert O. Stone, commanding the 440th AAA, and the lead elements of the 116th Panzer Division.³⁵

Until 16 December, Stone's battalion had been well forward where they had tried, without much success, to shoot down "Buzz Bombs" en route to Liege. At 1300 on 18 December, Stone, now attached to the 106th ID, and his headquarters were moving into Gouvy from the east. Three German tanks came through Gouvy firing up the town, the dump and generally wreaking havoc. The Germans raked Stone's column as it approached Gouvy, but then turned around and went back through town with Hughes' mortars lobbing rounds at them.³⁶

LTC Stone, now quite angry, moved into Gouvy where he discovered the service troops in an understandable uproar. Stone got everyone under control and with Hughes organized the defense of the town. This included dousing the fire in the dump which rail troops had started in order to prevent the Germans from seizing the rations intact. Stone, who warmed to the task, advised 7th AD that, "By God, the others may run, but I'm staying and holding at all costs."³⁷ Thus, Stone and Hughes stiffened the southern flank.

While the troops in Gouvy were getting organized, the 7th AD trains arrived in Vielsalm where they added to the congestion. Consequently, Hasbrouck ordered them further west in order to clear the area for combat troops. The Divisional artillery also arrived and moved into position quickly enough to fire some twenty-one missions in the late afternoon. The 7th AD, in cooperation with the 106th and CCB 9th AD, achieved a tenuous horseshoe defense around St. Vith by nightfall on 18 December. CCR had little more than a screen built around 1LT Whiteman's "task force." CCA had gotten into Poteau, but had accomplished little more. The 17th TB, which remained part of CCR, still held positions south of Recht. Clarke controlled an arc east of St. Vith centered on Prumerberg. On Clarke's right, Hoge held positions on the east bank of the Our. In the southeast, the 424th retained most of its original positions. On the southern flank, Stone and Hughes provided some security. As yet unknown to Hasbrouck, COL Nelson's 112th

had fought its way back to Huldange some four miles east of Gouvy (See Map 5).

Here, Nelson decided to hold, if he could, since he could not comply with orders from his division to fall back on Trois Verges to the south. To do that, or to reoccupy a line further east which the 28th had also proposed, Nelson would have had to attack through the 116th Panzer Division and the 560th VGD. Nelson, believing he could not rejoin the 28th ID, asked Jones to attach the 112th. Jones did so on his own responsibility.³⁸ Neither Hasbrouck nor Jones had cause to be satisfied with the arrangements as they existed, but a fair amount had been achieved under continued enemy pressure.

On 19 December the Germans raised the ante. Both Manteuffel and Model wanted St. Vith badly. As long as the town remained in American hands the St. Vith road network could not be used. Manteuffel believed the "capture and therefore elimination of St. Vith...was of the greatest importance both for our own army and especially for the 6th Panzer Army."³⁹ To obtain additional combat power, Model and Manteuffel had agreed on 17 December to commit the Fuhrer Escort Brigade's seventy tanks and its excellent panzer grenadiers at St. Vith. The Brigade spent all of 18 December struggling forward over slippery and precipitous inclines and through the great congestion building in the German rear. Early on 19 December part of the Brigade



finally reached attack positions northeast of St. Vith.⁴⁰

Since Hasbrouck and his commanders had imposed a degree of order and coherence on the perimeter, they could now conduct an "active defense" against the growing German threat. According to General Clarke, an active defense differed from a passive defense in that an active defense enabled an armored division to "exploit its mobility."⁴¹ Clarke maintained an armored reserve in a position from which it could conduct counterattacks to preempt German penetration of his main line of resistance or restore his line if it was penetrated. Clarke tried to keep a tank battalion ready to run what he called a "race track." The counter-attacking unit would move from its position and flank German attacks.⁴² This reflected Hasbrouck's policy of refusing his flanks and maintaining a reserve to counterattack as required.⁴³ To the degree that it was possible, battalion commanders followed the same policy.

The Fuhrer Escort Brigade launched its first attack at 0615 hours. The 31st TB repelled this attack with artillery and direct fire. Undeterred, the Brigade attacked again at 1320 with a battalion of infantry, supported by more than a dozen tanks. As the Brigade came south across the Emmels valley, LTC Robert C. Erlenbusch maneuvered his reserve of one platoon of M-4s from Rodt east toward Hunningen. Near Hunningen, the Shermans maneuvered onto the ridge above and on the flank of the attacker. Caught in a kill zone between

the bulk of the battalion to its front and a tank platoon on its left flank, the German task force withdrew leaving an estimated twelve tanks and five other vehicles along the way.⁴⁴

On the left flank, CCR spent the day trying to get a contact patrol from Petit Thiers up to CCA at Poteau. This proved difficult because the 1st SS Panzer Division kept up steady, if not very strong, pressure as it made its way west. CCR also conducted an "active defense" running combat patrols and "continuous reconnaissance" of its entire sector.⁴⁵

In the center, CCB also enjoyed the attentions of the Germans in the form of a sharp firefight which lasted from 0930 until 1300. A platoon of the 814th TD destroyed three German tanks at the extreme range of 2,000 yards before the Germans finally withdrew.⁴⁶

In the center of the horseshoe, Clarke and Hoge reached the conclusion that Hoge's position, east of the Our River, would not be tenable in the event the Germans forced Clarke out of St. Vith. Because the only bridge over the Our Hoge could use was at St. Vith, the two decided he should "move back behind that line (the Our) to some place where I can move around and have a chance of getting out if I'm attacked along the line."⁴⁷ Accordingly, the two Generals coordinated the withdrawal of Hoge's forces to a position south of St. Vith where they could tie in with Clarke's troops. Hoge conducted the move that night and from then on the two maintained "close liaison."⁴⁸

Hoge also gained contact with the 424th Infantry on his right. However, a gap remained between the 106th ID's last regiment and the forces of "Task Force" Stone in Gouvvy and the rear was not secure either. In response to a report of a disabled German tank near Houffalize, well to the division rear, the 814th TD sent a patrol to knock it out. The German tank moved before the tank destroyers reached its reported location so they returned without results. On the return trip, a German unit ambushed the patrol, killing two officers and destroying a tank destroyer and two jeeps.⁴⁹

The Division's artillery, augmented by two battalions (one of which was a 155 battalion), began to make its presence felt on 19 December. CCB 7th AD, in particular, used artillery to advantage by firing concentrations on enemy units as they massed in preparation for attacks. The technique employed was simple-- "whenever a threat was present... artillery would land upon it, breaking it up and dispersing the assembled forces."⁵⁰ Artillery worked on tanks as well as infantry. LTC Richard D. Chappuis, who commanded the 48th AIB, reported that "German tanks often will withdraw when faced by heavy massed artillery." He added that the plan "we used successfully was to suck in their armor, stop it with massed artillery and then to proceed to KO the Jerry tanks at close range with our Shermans."⁵¹

Despite the success of the artillery and of the defense generally, the defenders along the St. Vith horseshoe front

continued to have grave problems. The Division G-2 had identified the 1st SS Panzer Division and the 18th and 62nd VGDs. Though he believed the 1st SS was "sliding by" to the west, he knew some armor had remained in the area.⁵² The threat in the south had not yet clarified itself, but the experiences at Gouvy and the ambush of the 814th's patrol boded ill for the command. Hasbrouck communicated his appreciation of his situation and his dissatisfaction with the lack of information from VIII Corps to General Middleton. In a message sent at 1430, Hasbrouck advised Middleton of his positions, noting the presence on his southern flank of CCB 9th AD, the 424th and the 112th. Of his left flank he remarked, "No friendly troops known to be on our north." He reported that he was "protecting [his] flanks as far west as L'Ourthe River as best I can with miscellaneous units." He concluded by asking Middleton to "establish communications with me. I intend to hold present positions unless you order otherwise."⁵³ Middleton responded at 1810 with, "You are doing a grand job. Hold your positions and we will do the same."⁵⁴

Middleton's good cheer offered little help, but there was little else he could do. Middleton had positioned the 101st and part of the 10th AD in and around Bastogne, but the Germans had already begun to bypass the town in their urgency to get on to the Meuse crossings. Major General Matthew B. Ridgway's XVIII Corps with the 3rd AD and the 82nd Airborne were moving into position north and west

of Hasbrouck. Until the 82nd closed on the Salm River the defenders of St. Vith could rely on themselves only.⁵⁵ The best General Hasbrouck could do to help himself was to order the reconstituted 14th CAV into the line as three separate troops.⁵⁶ The Germans offset this effort by accepting the surrender of the 422nd and 423rd Infantry Regiments at 1600 that afternoon. The Fuhrer Escort Brigade and the troops of the LXVI Corps could henceforth devote their undivided attention to taking St. Vith.⁵⁷

On 20 December, the troops endured another cold, wet day which the Division described as passing "rather quietly" in Clarke's sector.⁵⁸ The troops in the line might have challenged that assessment. Certainly, the artillery did not have a quiet day. On 20 December, the artillery fired 6,815 rounds in 300 missions in support of the force, which according to the Division Artillery report fended off twenty-one separate attacks which came from "every direction."⁵⁹

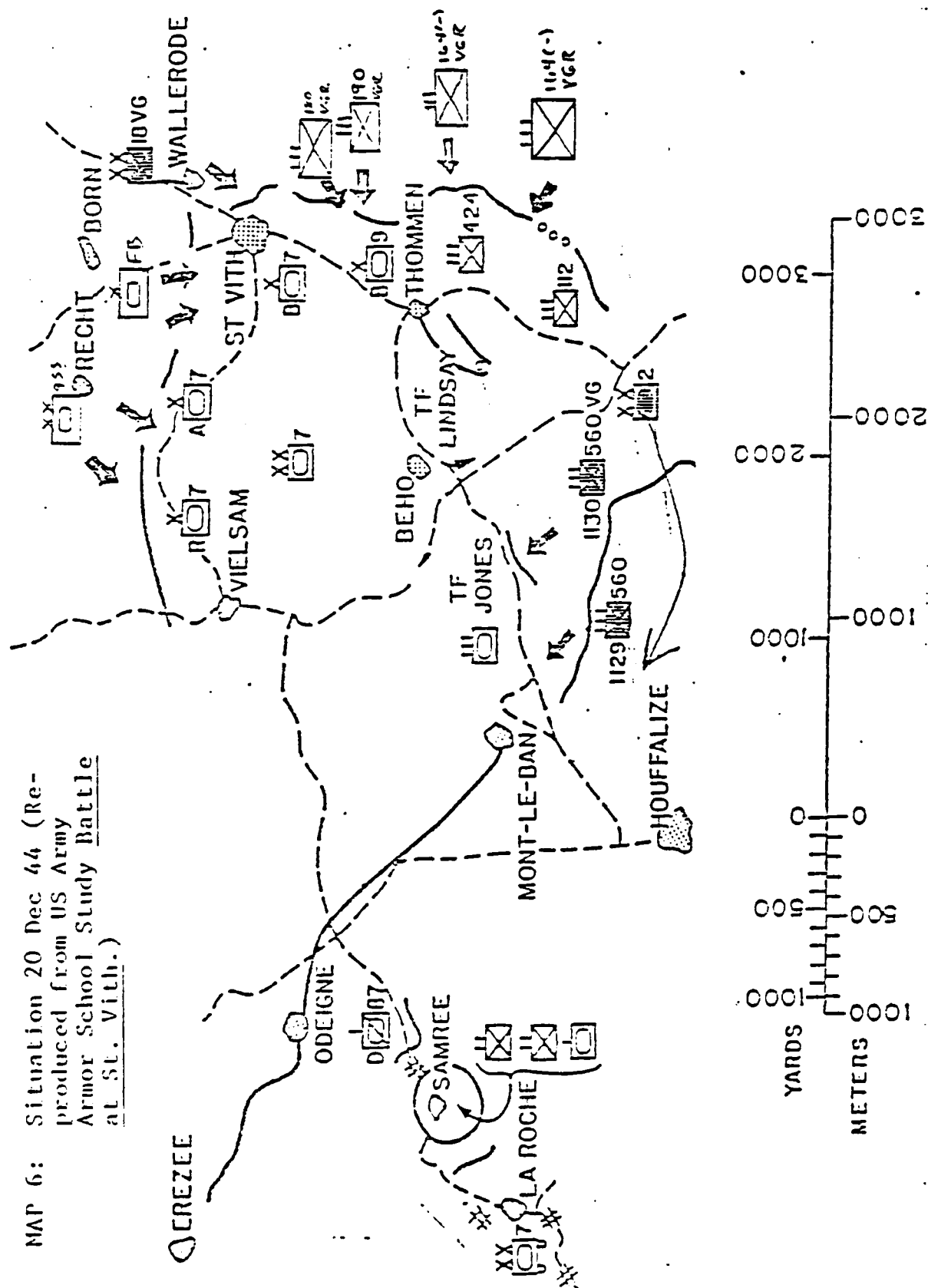
The defenders, thus, had plenty of opportunities to demonstrate the "active defense." In one instance, CCB 9th AD detected a build up of German units [the 164th Volks Grenadier Regiment] in the vicinity of Grufflingen. General Hoge ordered the 14th TB to conduct a reconnaissance in force. At 0830 14th TB sent out a task force composed of D/14th TB and D/89th CAV to locate the enemy. In dense woods, two miles southeast of Grufflingen, the task force located German infantry supported by at least

one tank and a towed anti-tank gun. A desultory fire fight ensued with the task force at a disadvantage since it had no infantry. A call for infantry support produced the Headquarters Company Commander and sixteen of his soldiers. At the end of the day the tankers, cavalrymen and their "infantry" retained their chunk of woods, captured prisoners, destroyed one tank and prevented the build up of a German attack from Grufflingen, at a cost of two Stuart tanks.⁶⁰ Hoge's reinforced combat patrol, forward of the line of resistance, spoiled the 164th's attack and preserved the integrity of his positions.

While Hoge's troops roused the Germans out of the Grufflingen woods, Hasbrouck occupied himself with stiffening his southern flank. To do this, he organized a task force under the command of LTC Robert B. Jones, 814th TD. Task Force (TF) Jones included units of the 7th AD, the 14th CAV, the 28th ID, as well as the troops already in Gouvy under the command of the indomitable LTC Stone. Jones' force spent the day occupying a rough crescent through the villages of Deiffelt, Gouvy, and Cheram (also know as Chervain).⁶¹ COL Nelson's 112th also came into the line on 20 December. Nelson moved in between the 424th and Gouvy, thus closing that gap, but Jones' right flank at Cheram hung in the air (See Map 6).

To Hasbrouck the comparative respite the Division enjoyed on 20 December brought no comfort. Though the defenders had held their own the situation continued to

MAP 6: Situation 20 Dec 44 (Re-produced from US Army Armor School Study Battle at St. Vith.)



deteriorate. He needed help and information. Cut off from VIII Corps, Hasbrouck decided to appeal to 1st Army. That morning he sent LTC Frederick Schroeder, the Division Chemical officer, to look for 1st Army which he knew was somewhere to the north. Schroeder got through following the same circuitous route that Hasbrouck's supply trucks had been using. Schroeder carried a letter for Hodges' chief of staff. In the letter, Hasbrouck reported his situation, including his belief that the 116th Panzer and the 560th VGD were mounting an attack on Gouvvy. He reported that he could hold, "but need help. An attack from Bastogne to the NE will relieve the situation and in turn cut the Bastards off in the rear."⁶² Major General William Kean dispatched his answer at 1230 promising that Ridgway was en route with "armor and infantry." Hodges' chief of staff clarified the command situation by giving Hasbrouck command of all the units in the pocket.⁶³ That same day, responsibility for the St. Vith sector passed from Middleton's VIII Corps to Ridgway's inbound XVIII Corps.

The Germans, as the artillery action indicates, did not idle away the day either. Two regiments of the 18th VGD closed in on St. Vith. One of them, the 295th Volks Grenadier Regiment (VGR), attacked unsuccessfully towards the railway station in town. The Fuhrer Escort Brigade took Nieder Emmels in the morning, posing a threat on the northeastern approach into Clarke's positions. LXVI Corps moved in a rocket artillery brigade which could support attacks on

St. Vith. The 18th VGD also wrestled its artillery in position. To Clarke's dismay, some of that artillery moved into reverse slope positions in the vicinity of Wallerode. From reverse slope positions, the German artillery could fire on CCB with little fear of retribution from American counterbattery fire. Though Hoge's reconnaissance in force discomfited the 62nd VGD's 164th VGR, that division had moved all of its regiments into position to strike towards St. Vith. The movement west of the LVIII Panzer Corps (116th Panzer Division and the 560th VGD) continued to threaten the right flank. TF Jones had to drive elements of the 560th out of Cheram in order to occupy the town.⁶⁴

Though the combat elements had achieved adequate organization to deal with all but the strongest German attacks, Hasbrouck's rear was less well-heeled. The 7th AD Trains, commanded by COL Andrew J. Adams, constituted the only US forces between Cheram and Bostogne. COL Adams knew the positions of the forward elements and well understood that he would not only have to move supplies, but would have to defend himself and protect the Division rear as well. Adams operated the Division supply trains from LaRoche, but had established a Division distribution point at Samree. LaRoche and Samree both sat astride highway N-28. At LaRoche, N-28 crossed the Ourthe River, the last major barrier before the Meuse. Samree lay three miles east of LaRoche and roughly eight miles southwest of Vielsalm via N-28.⁶⁵

COL Adams established some twelve roadblocks to secure these two vital towns and the Division's main supply route. To man the roadblocks he used his service troops, Service Battery of the 440th AFA, D/203rd AAA, and miscellaneous Corps troops including engineers who had been operating sawmills in the area. Tanks and other combat vehicles coming out of maintenance provided convoy security. This system proved adequate to deal with small German probes.⁶⁶

On 19 December, however, the German LVIII Corps ordered its 116th Panzer Division to take Samree. The "Windhund" Division, which had been closing on Bastogne, spent all of the night of 19 December getting reoriented to move on Samree. An attack through Samree and on to the north, despite the problems it caused the Windhunds, could rupture the fragile northern shoulder of the US forces and take all of the troops in the St. Vith sector in the rear. The 116th began its attack on Adams' rear area troops at 0945 on 20 December. Through the morning, the service troops held their own. However, by noon a dense fog settled on the area which enabled the Germans to infiltrate infantry into Samree. With help from a 3rd AD tank battalion task force, commanded by LTC Samuel M. Hogan, the trains held Samree until evening when they were finally driven out.⁶⁷

Over 20,000 gallons of gasoline and perhaps 15,000 rations fell into the hands of the 116th's Panzer Regiment. To the exultant and fuel-starved Windhunds, this windfall seemed "a present from heaven." On the positive side, the

7th's service troops and TF Hogan delayed the 116th and prevented it from consolidating its hold on the area between LaRoche and Samree which enabled the 84th ID and the 3rd AD to occupy positions on the shoulder forming on the northern side of the German penetration.⁶⁸

Further east the "quiet day" showed signs of becoming more lively. Early in the evening the Fuhrer Escort Brigade made another effort towards Clarke's lines from Nieder Emmels. Enemy movements throughout the day tipped LTC Erlenbusch, of the 31st TB, and MAJ Beaty, commanding TF Beaty from the 31st TB, to the coming attack. Beaty moved four tank destroyers up into hull defilade overlooking the approaches from Nieder Emmels alongside the road from Nieder Emmels to Hunningen. Erlenbusch ordered his reserve of one M-4 platoon under LT Borman to "spread out turret defilade along the ridge west of Hunningen." Borman, who had broken up the attack of the previous day, placed his tanks into positions about "100 yards" apart. Erlenbusch and Beaty arranged on call concentrations from both mortars and artillery in support of these arrangements. According to Erlenbusch:

The basic plan was to let the lead tanks break over the hill and come abreast of our tanks. Our tanks had all of their guns pointed north. On command, the platoon would fire simultaneously to knock out the lead tanks and then move forward to engage subsequent wave, if any. The TDs were to engage whatever came down the road trying to hit them in the belly as they crossed the ridge belly up. The prearranged fires were to be called by Beaty to handle the foot solders, if any.⁶⁹

When dark fell:

Borman dismounted his bow gunners [The bow gun was a machine gun mounted on the front slope of a tank.] and equipped them with sound power phones. They were posted ahead of each tank to keep the tank commander informed of the direction the lead tanks were taking relative to his tank. The bow gunner was to withdraw and join his own crew when the enemy tank closed to 50 yards or so from the front.⁷⁰

The attack began after 1740 and reached engagement range sometime before 2000. The four TDs fired on the first four German tanks to cross the ridge. They took out all four almost simultaneously at ranges of about fifty yards. As the following tanks tried to maneuver, Borman's platoon stopped three more at about 100 yards. This triggered the pre-planned artillery which "was so perfect...we never knew if there was infantry or not behind the tanks."⁷¹ As the Germans withdrew, the TDs got a German assault gun and perhaps damaged another.

Despite this success, Hasbrouck's fourth day in St. Vith drew to an end ominously. At least for the present, he was cut off from his supplies and knew his command had contact with friendly forces only via a tortuous route winding to the northwest from Vielsalm. That same day the G-2 reported the capture of a soldier from the 2nd SS who claimed his division was also coming. Adding this to the other identifications, Hasbrouck believed his troops were fighting seven German divisions.⁷²

Throughout the night the Americans in and around St. Vith could hear the movement of armor and trucks in the

Wallerode, Nieder and Ober Emmels area. Starved for troops, Hasbrouck put out straggler lines which netted seventy survivors of the Schnee Eifel disaster. Clarke ordered the tired survivors "assembled in the schoolhouse in St. Vith" where they were fed and given a few supplies. They "constituted a reserve to be called upon when needed."⁷³

The noise that the defenders heard came from the LXVI Corps' concentration for a final effort at St. Vith. South and west of St. Vith, Manteuffel had three more divisions ready to attack. The 116th Panzer and the 560th VGD were poised to attack the northern shoulder well in the rear of the 7th AD. The 2nd SS Panzer had maneuvered around to the south to attack north across the immediate rear of Hasbrouck's forces. As the 5th Panzer Army began its attack on 21 December, a drama involving the 589th FA began to unfold in the critical right rear of the pocket.⁷⁴

The 589th, which belonged to the 106th ID, had escaped the Schnee Eifel with three tubes. On 19 December, the 589th was, in the words of the 106th's historian, "commandeered" by COL Herbert Kruger, commander of VIII Corps' 174th Artillery Group. On 19 December, after using the 589th to cover his withdrawal, Kruger left them some six miles west of Vielsalm at Baraque de Fraiture where Highways N-28 and N-15 intersected.⁷⁵ N-15 went north through the intersection towards Manhay and eventually to Liege. N-28 ran generally east and west. To the west,

N-28 led to LaRoche. Going east N-28 reached the 7th's rear at Salmchateau on the Salm River.

This junction was critical to the defenders of the St. Vith pocket and to their potential rescuers, the 82nd Airborne. If the Germans took the crossroads, they would encircle everyone in the pocket. If the Germans continued north from Baraque, they would take the 82nd in the flank. Not surprisingly, bits and pieces of the 3rd AD, the 82nd (both from XVIII Airborne Corps), and a cavalry troop from the 7th AD were sent to the crossroads. But, MAJ Arthur C. Parker III, acting commander of the 589th, carried the load for everyone.⁷⁶

On 21 December the 2nd SS Panzer, nicknamed "Das Reich," struck at Baraque. Das Reich had orders "to repulse the enemy [from] the crossroads Baraque de Fraiture and beyond Manhay."⁷⁷ The SS tankers drew the mission because the 560th VGD "had failed due to the strength and alertness of the enemy."⁷⁸ When the SS hit the intersection, Parker had three 105 howitzers, a detachment of the 203rd AAA and a platoon from the 87th RCN. For three days, Parker held the crossroads against savage attacks. Das Reich's own history described their opponents as men who "knew how to fight with valor and die without fear." According to the history: "Rarely had there been such bitter fighting at such close quarters."⁷⁹ Finally, on 23 December Das Reich overran the defenders of what had become "Parker's Crossroads," but

not before the 82nd had moved in to the north and covered the 7th's rear along the Salm River from Vielsalm.

While Parker barred the back door, St. Vith's defenders fought against strong German attacks. In CCB's sector, Clarke gave ground grudgingly; but, by 2000, German tanks and infantry, operating in company-strength teams, had penetrated his defenses in several places on the north side of St. Vith. At 2100 the situation had worsened due to German attacks along the seam of Clarke and Hoge's two combat commands. General Clarke prepared to pull back by establishing a line and guides just west of St. Vith. At 2130 Clarke advised Hoge that he was pulling back. Hoge, who had already shifted one tank company of the 14th TB to cover the boundary with Clarke, now prepared to refuse his left flank.⁸⁰

The German tank-infantry attacks before St. Vith were "beautiful to behold."⁸¹ The tanks and infantry moved up together. The infantry advanced and fired under illumination provided by the tanks. As their flares went out, the tanks moved up, firing all weapons and then the Germans repeated the process. These tactics proved very effective, because they did not allow the Americans time to react. At 2200, in the face of several penetrations, Clarke ordered his units to withdraw to the ridges west of St. Vith. Before CCB could withdraw, the 18th entered St. Vith, cutting off as many as 400 of the defenders.⁸²

The 3rd Platoon, A Company, 814th TD bought CCB 7th AD a few minutes to consolidate its defenses west of St. Vith. The platoon occupied a strong point in the center of town. At approximately 2330 hours, one of its M-10s knocked out the lead tank of a German armor column moving through town. The destroyed tank blocked the road, but the American tank destroyer had also been damaged. A race occurred between the Americans trying to repair their damaged track and the Germans trying to clear the road or find a way around the knocked-out tank. Fortunately, the Americans won the race and got out of St. Vith heading west. With their departure, the defense of the town ended.⁸³

At midnight the situation looked uniformly bad. On the north flank, CCR held its position intact, but CCA and CCB had been pushed back from the Poteau-St. Vith arc. Hasbrouck, who knew that the 2nd Panzer had hit "Parker's Crossroads" hard, feared he would be completely encircled. He, therefore, ordered TF Jones to swing back to its northeast and "hold like grim death towns of Beho, Bovigny." In the same message, Hasbrouck told Jones, "we must have that road [Beho-Bovigny north towards Salm Chateau]. Make liberal use of mines and know where they are."⁸⁴ If Jones failed, none of the units south of St. Vith could expect to escape.

After five days of hard fighting, the defenders of St. Vith had not produced a victory or even a conclusion to the battle. Hasbrouck's troops still remained close enough

to St. Vith to prevent the Germans from using its road network. That issue and the question of whether the troops in the St. Vith salient could be extricated remained unsettled. But, the defense of St. Vith had interfered with Manteuffel's plans, decisively. Manteuffel concluded that "by delaying actions in the area of St. Vith the enemy gained time to bring up forces for the defense of the Salm sector and to organize the stoppage of the penetration of the northern flank." In short, Manteuffel felt "the enemy had taken full advantage of the time element and by his successful battles for St. Vith turned the issue in his own favor."⁸⁵

The defense of St. Vith through 21 December provides several insights on the importance of the operational concepts of agility, depth, initiative and synchronization. The 106th serves as a grim reminder of what can happen to a unit which is not agile, and can not fight deep, close-in, and in its rear. The 106th's passive conduct ceded initiative to the attacker, and its failure to protect command and control made synchronization impossible. Unlike the 106th, the 7th AD demonstrated an intuitive understanding of these operational concepts and, more importantly, acted on them.

The 7th AD's "active defense" demonstrated physical and mental agility throughout the battle. General Clarke's "race track" counterattacks could not have succeeded without speed and decentralized execution. The immense confusion of the first few days of the battle taxed the patience, endur-

ance and mental agility of the Division and its leadership. Hasbrouck tolerated uncertainty with aplomb and turned fortuitous occurrences, such as Whiteman's road block at Petit Thier, to his advantage. The entire Division demonstrated agility by its capacity for rapid reorientation and ability to fight a non-linear defense. At times, the troops in the salient fought in three directions.

The conduct of a non-linear defense demands the capacity to fight throughout the depth of a position. Hasbrouck had to keep the road net in St. Vith out of German hands and fend off attackers from the north and south with far fewer soldiers than he needed. To achieve this goal, Hasbrouck extended his flanks. He was able to support this risky defense by keeping a small mobile reserve that could be quickly shunted to trouble spots as they developed. The artillery further enhanced this defense because it could strike German formations as they assembled to attack. Thus, the Division used its artillery to fight "deep." Such "deep" attacks reached no more than a few kilometers into the German rear because of the limited range (less than eleven kilometers) of the artillery and restrictions in the use of observation aircraft due to poor weather.

General Hoge understood the utility of attacking the Germans forward of his line of troops when possible. Hoge's attack on the 164th VGR (as it tried to concentrate in the Grufflingen woods) clearly illustrates the utility of fighting forward of the line of contact. These tactics

increased the 7th's depth and allowed them to trade space for time once it became clear the 7th lacked the resources to prevent indefinitely the German's efforts to seize St. Vith. General Hasbrouck never intended to dig in and hold a specific line. Rather, he hoped to deny the Germans the use of St. Vith. His active, or mobile, defense thus featured furious defense in some positions, delaying tactics elsewhere, and counterattacks when possible. In the end, the 7th's defense of St. Vith, though it proved unsuccessful, cost the Germans dearly and greatly affected their future operations in the Battle of the Bulge.

In addition to gaining time, Hoge's attack on the 164th robbed the Germans of initiative. In fact, the 7th seized the initiative on several occasions. For example, LTC Erlenbusch preempted the Fuhrer Escort Brigade on both 19 and 20 December by attacking the Brigade as it launched attacks. Also, Hasbrouck benefited from the personal initiative of the soldiers under his command. COL Adams acted on his own, within Hasbrouck's intent, to do more than bring up the supplies. As a result, the Division Trains played an important combat role at Samree on 20 December. Whiteman at Petit Thier, Stone at Gouvy, and Parker at Baraque de Fraiture also contributed to the defense without instructions. The 7th AD's ability to seize the initiative deprived the Germans of their most potent advantage.

Synchronization of combat power enabled the 7th AD to fight outnumbered. On the evening of 20 December, the

31st TB thrashed a battalion of the Fuhrer Escort Brigade by synchronizing the effects of one platoon of Shermans, a platoon of Tank Destroyers and pre-planned artillery fire. LTC Erlenbusch and MAJ Beaty sited the tank destroyers to shoot the German tanks head on. When the Germans turned to avoid the highly lethal tank destroyers they presented their flanks to LT Borman's less lethal Shermans. The direct fire engagement triggered the artillery which completed the unraveling of the German attack. LTC Chappuis, of the 48th AIB, also understood synchronization of combat power. Chappuis' system of killing tanks used artillery to stop German armor and strip off their infantry. Lastly, the Shermans came into play to destroy the German armor at close range. Synchronization, in addition to agility, initiative and depth, proved crucial in the 7th's fight against parts of three German corps.

The final "lesson" of the battle at St. Vith concerns the nature of the fighting. Forty years after the battle, General Bruce C. Clarke recalled that what he remembered most clearly was the confusion. He was not, however, confused about what Hasbrouck expected. Clarke's experience led him to stress during the remainder of his career that his chief task at St. Vith was to "prevent the confusion from becoming disorganized." Expressed in the language of Clausewitz, the task of a general is to overcome friction. There was plenty of friction at St. Vith. Units became intermingled, some got lost and some panicked. Rumor

competed with fact as the basis for decisions by commanders. Traffic control, or the lack of it, affected the ability of both sides to concentrate combat power.

The defenders of St. Vith overcame friction in several ways. Hasbrouck, Jones, Clarke and Hoge cooperated without the nicety of a corps order or even a clear delineation of lines of command. Hasbrouck determined how to defend and issued orders accordingly; but, he allowed his subordinates to fight their own battles within the context of his overall scheme. His subordinates, however, understood his intent and so could function with a minimum of formal directions. Personal initiative also reduced friction. When COL Nelson found that he could not do what his division commander wanted, he joined the defense of St. Vith. LT Whiteman could not reach his unit because the Germans blocked the road. Whiteman could have chosen to return to Vielsalm, but instead he established a roadblock. Though Hasbrouck had not drawn a goose egg on his map labeled Whiteman, he made use of the Lieutenant's initiative. Individual initiative and the willingness to make use of it enabled the 7th AD to overcome friction and prevent the confusion from becoming disorganized. Consequently, the defenders of St. Vith disrupted the momentum of Manteuffel's attack and helped to ensure the failure of the German offensive.

ENDNOTES: Chapter 2

¹Cole, The Ardennes, pp. 48-51; and Merriam, Dark December, pp. 82-101. Royce Thompson, "American Intelligence on the German Counter Offensive (1 November-15 December 1944: Division Level)", Historical section, SSUSA, March 1949, clearly shows that the frontline divisions obtained hard intelligence which indicated a major attack.

²Generalmajor Carl Wagener, Fifth Panzer Army 12 Nov 44-16 Jan 45, MS# B-235, p. 64. See also, General der Panzertruppen Hasso von Manteuffel, Sequel to MS# B-151, MS# B-151a, p. 67.

³Moll, MS# B-688, p.8.

⁴106th ID Combat Interviews, letter dated 24 August 1945, 1LT Robert R. Wessels to Colonel S. L. A. Marshall.

⁵Kittel, "A New 62nd," p. 3.

⁶106th ID Combat Interviews, LTC Earle Williams, 106th ID Signal Officer, 1 January 1945.

⁷Cole, The Ardennes, pp. 136-172. See also, Manteuffel, MS# B-151, pp. 8-13.

⁸The meeting between Clarke and Middleton occurred several hours after Middleton had promised General Jones that CCB 7th AD would arrive at St. Vith at 0700. At 2200 16 December, Majors Moeller and New had arrived as Hasbrouck's liaison to VIII Corps. All three of the 7th's officers knew that their division could not arrive at 0700 17 December even if the march was flawless. It is reasonable to assume that by 0300 17 December that VIII Corps must have known that Middleton's promise to Jones had no basis in fact. Why then did VIII Corps not advise Jones of the truth?

⁹7th AD Combat Interviews, Major Fred Sweat, S-3 CCR, 28 December 1944.

¹⁰It is difficult to determine just what happened to the 7th AD's Artillery (Div Arty) on its march to the St. Vith sector. CCR, moving one hour ahead of Div Arty, cleared the Malmedy corridor just prior to Peiper's arrival. By the time the artillery approached Malmedy the massacre had already occurred and troops in the area were passing rumors of the massacre and of Peiper's presence. The artillery also received a report of the Germans' presence

from the commander of the 291st Engineers who was preparing the defense of the town. The Div Arty executive officer needed no other information to decide to divert his column to the western route via highway N-23 to Stavelot. Peiper moved toward Stavelot via Pont arriving at 1800. Here, his lead elements halted on the ridge overlooking Stavelot because the town was choked with troops on the move. The Germans concluded that the town was heavily defended and decided to wait until morning to launch their attack to seize the Ambleve River bridges in Stavelot. This decision probably saved the artillery which had only the 203rd AAA to defend it. The following morning at 0810 Peiper launched a setpiece attack on the town. By this time, only D Battery of the 203rd remained in Stavelot. That unit fended off the lead tanks of Peiper's Kampfgruppe for an hour while the rest of the artillery got out of town. 7th AD Div Arty AAR December 1944, p. 8; 440th AFA AAR December 1944, p. 4; 203rd AAA AAR December 1944, p. 1. See also, Janice Holt Giles, The Damned Engineers, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1970, p.231.

¹¹US Army Armor School. The Battle at St. Vith, Belgium: 17 December-23 December 1944, Ft. Knox, Kentucky, 1949, pp. 6-7.

¹²Brigadier General William M. Hoge Interview, US Army War College Oral History Program.

¹³Interview with General Bruce C. Clarke, 19 August 1984, McLean, Virginia.

¹⁴106th ID Combat Interviews, MAJ Walter A. Marshal, Executive Officer 81st Engineer Battalion, et. al., 11 January 1945. See also, 106th ID Combat Interview, LTC W. L. Nungesser, Commanding Officer 168th Engineer Battalion, 4 February 1945.

¹⁵Clarke interview, 19 August 1984.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Dupuy, Lion, pp. 75-83.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 77. See also, Roy U. Clay et. al., Curbstone: The History of the 275th Field Artillery Battalion in WW II, (Jackson, Tennessee: Ray Richardson, 1978), pp. 10-13. On Clay's interactions with the 14th CAV see, Interview with Colonel Roy U. Clay, 23 August 1984, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

¹⁹Dupuy, Lion, p. 77.

207th AD Combat Interviews, Brigadier General Robert W. Hasbrouck, 3 January 1945.

21Hasbrouck's "orders" allowed him to commit no more than two of his Combat Commands. He acted as he did because he feared the Germans would come south. Interview with Major General Robert W. Hasbrouck, 20 August 1984, Washington, D. C.

227th AD AAR December 1944, p. 2.

23Hoge interview. See also, 28th ID Combat Interview Colonel Gustin M. Nelson, Commanding Officer 112th Infantry, 14 January 1945. Though Jones knew Nelson's whereabouts, Hasbrouck knew nothing of Nelson until 19 December. 7th AD AAR December 1944, p. 7.

24Nungesser interview.

25Through 18 December, the road from Poteau to Vielsalm remained a log jam of intermingled convoys and single vehicles bent on getting west. Clarke found the congestion sufficiently frustrating to comment on it in his AAR. CCB 7th AD AAR December 1944, Annex 1, p. 1.

26The accounts of the 424th and CCB 9th AD include several references to the shoddy tactics of the 62nd. The 62nd often advanced in open order and even in columns of four. See, CCB 9th AD AAR December 1944. See also, combat interviews of Cannon Company, 424th Infantry.

27Hasbrouck interview 20 August 1984. Middleton did not establish a single commander for the St. Vith sector. In theory, Hasbrouck assumed responsibility north of St. Vith and Jones had responsibility south of St. Vith. That was an unworkable solution since Jones had already ceded the defense of the town to Clarke. The command situation remained murky. At one point Hasbrouck and Jones were instructed to cooperate. Later Hasbrouck was attached to Jones, but General Jones was to conform to Hasbrouck's decisions. In the end, Hasbrouck did what he thought best; Jones chose not to intercede or interfere.

287th AD AAR December 1944, p. 4. According to General Hasbrouck, the 14th's senior leadership "weren't very good." Telephone Interview with Major General Robert W. Hasbrouck, 17 May 1984.

29Hasbrouck interview 19 August 1984.

307th AD Combat Interviews, 1LT Joe V. Whiteman, 4 January 1945.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid. During the course of 18 December CCR designated a CPT Albrick commander of the Petit Thier defenses. The following day when Albrick was injured, Whiteman took command and the force officially became Task Force Navaho. See, Sweat interview.

³⁴Hasbrouck issued a fragmentary order at 0300 18 December which established defensive sectors and a division task organization. He provided CCR a rump battalion by pulling bits and pieces from CCA and CCB.

³⁵Cole, The Ardennes, pp. 286-287. See also, 40th TB AAR December 1944, and 440th AFA AAR December 1944.

³⁶440th AFA AAR December 1944, pp. 4-5.

³⁷7th AD AAR December 1944, p. 8.

³⁸Nelson interview. Dupuy, Lion, p. 155.

³⁹Manteuffel hoped to use the Fuhrer Escort Brigade further south in the Army "center of gravity", but the 7th confounded his plans. Manteuffel MS# B-151a, p. 30.

⁴⁰ The Brigade got its marching orders on the night of 17 December; but it needed 36 hours to move the 20 kilometers from Prum to the St. Vith sector due to icy roads and heavy congestion.

⁴¹Clarke interview 19 August 1984.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Hasbrouck interview 17 May 1984.

⁴⁴Letter, Colonel Robert C. Erlenbush to Major Gregory Fontenot dated 24 August 1984.

⁴⁵CCR 7th AD AAR December 1944, p. 9. One troop of the 87th RCN screened from CCR's left flank to Vaux Chavannes on the west side of the Salm.

⁴⁶CCB 7th AD AAR December 1944, p. 3. See 814th TD AAR December 1944, p. 3.

⁴⁷Hoge interview. See also, Clarke interview 19 August 1984. Clarke told Hoge that unless conditions changed St. Vith would fall.

⁴³CCB 7th AD AAR December 1944, p. 4.

⁴⁹814th TD AAR December 1944. The 7th AD and the 106th ID positions jutted out into the German lines like a peninsula. West of the Salm River this peninsula was no more than four miles wide, and frequented by German patrols.

⁵⁰7th AD Div Arty AAR December 1944, p. 12.

⁵¹48th AIB AAR December 1944, Commander's Battle Notes, p. 1.

⁵²7th AD AAR December 1944, G-2 Notes, p. 6.

⁵³Message, Hasbrouck to Middleton, dated 19 December 1944.

⁵⁴Message, Middleton to Hasbrouck, dated 19 December 1944.

⁵⁵General Matthew B. Ridgway, Soldier: The Memoirs of Matthew B. Ridgway, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956), pp. 112-116.

⁵⁶All three of these "new" units were under-strength. TF Lindsay, consisting of 11 armored cars, 11 Stuart tanks, 6 assault guns and 236 troops, occupied positions to the rear of 424th. Hasbrouck ordered Lindsay to prevent a penetration of 424th. TF Hawks, of 5 Stuarts and a 30 man recon team, manned a road block at Bovigny. Later it formed part of TF Jones built on the headquarters of the 814th TD. TF Wanke, with 8 armored cars and 80 men, screened a gap in CCR's line. 7th AD AAR December 1944, p. 7.

⁵⁷7th AD AAR December 1944, G-2 Notes, p. 7. See also, Dupuy, Lion, pp. 145-150.

⁵⁸Clarke's command enjoyed relative peace because Lucht's LXVI Corps could not concentrate sufficient combat power to mount an attack. Manteuffel's patience with Lucht reached a low point on 20 December. He ordered Lucht to take St. Vith on 21 December regardless of problems. Lucht, MS# B-333, p. 14. 7th AD AAR December 1944, p. 8.

⁵⁹7th AD Div Arty AAR December 1944, pp. 12-13.

⁶⁰14th TB AAR December 1944, History of the 14th Tank Battalion, pp. 13-14.

⁶¹7th AD AAR December 1944, p. 8. 814th TD AAR December 1944, p. 2. LTC Jones also diverted G Company 112th from a Corps mission. Middleton had ordered General Jones to launch an attack to relieve Bastogne. G Company was the best Jones could do. LTC Jones apparently persuaded the G Company Commander not to try to fight his way through to Bastogne. Hasbrouck ordered Task Force Lindsay into the line east of LTC Jones. Lindsay provided depth to the positions of the 424th Infantry and helped cover the gaps.

⁶²Cole, The Ardennes, p. 395.

⁶³Ibid. Middleton's last orders to the 106th required Jones to release CCB 9th AD to VIII Corps. Middleton wanted CCB to march some seventy-five miles to St. Hubert. Hoge considered the order impossible to execute because it would unravel the entire defense around St. Vith. Accordingly, he ignored the order. Hasbrouck, on hearing Middleton's intentions, went to Ridgway who retained CCB. See Hoge interview. See also, CCB 9th AD AAR December 1944, p. 7.

⁶⁴There is some confusion as to just who got to Cheram first, but the 814th TD definitely fought Germans in Cheram on 20 December. 814th TD AAR December 1944, p. 2.

⁶⁵Interview with Major General Andrew J. Adams, 20 August 1984.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Generalmajor Siegfried von Waldenburg, Commitment of the 116th Panzer Division in the Ardennes (16-26 Dec 1944). MS# A-873, pp. 14-15. See also, the translations of F. M. Emminger, Der Windhund: Divisional History of the 116th Panzer Division in the Ardennes Offensive, in the Charles B. MacDonald Papers. Re: Task Force Hogan see, Cole, The Ardennes, pp. 352-353. The arrival of Hogan's Task Force at Samree was entirely fortuitous. Hogan happened to be there because 3rd AD was moving south in accordance with instructions from Ridgway to secure the Bastogne-Liege Highway between Manhay and Houffalize. Concurrently, the 82nd Airborne was moving in east of Manhay to come in behind the 7th AD along the Salm River.

⁶⁸The quotation is from an excerpt of Der Windhund in the MacDonald Papers.

⁶⁹Erlenbusch to Fontenot, 24 August 1984.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²7th AD AAR December 1944, G-2 Notes, pp. 4-11; 18. The G-2 had also identified the Fuhrer Escort Brigade as the Gross Deutschland Division. This created quite a scare since that division was believed to be on the Eastern Front. In fact, it was. The Panzer Grenadiers of the Fuhrer Escort Brigade wore the flashes of Gross Deutschland, thus, the G-2's error was understandable.

⁷³CCB 7th AD AAR December 1944, p. 4.

⁷⁴Manteuffel, MS# B-151a, pp. 30-35. See also, Cole, The Ardennes, pp. 401-407.

⁷⁵Dupuy, Lion, pp. 182-190.

⁷⁶589th AAR December 1944. Baraque lay nearly at the boundary of the 82nd and 3rd AD. The 7th AD's main supply route also ran through the crossroads. Thus, all three divisions had an interest in what occurred there. However, Parker stayed throughout and deserves the credit for the defense of this critical intersection.

⁷⁷Otto Weidenger. Der Weg der 2.SS Panzer Division Das Reich: Die Geschichte der Sturm division der Waffen SS. Translation in the Charles B. MacDonald Papers, p. 362.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 365.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 366.

⁸⁰23rd AIB AAR December 1944, pp. 2-4. See also, Cole, The Ardennes, pp. 402-406. Re: Coordination between Clarke and Hoge see, CCB 9th AD AAR December 1944, p. 8.

⁸¹Nungesser interview. Comment of one of LTC Nungesser's lieutenants.

⁸²It is difficult to determine with certainty just which units were lost on the night of 21 December. The main German effort came straight down the road from Schoenberg. Clarke had units from two of the division's infantry battalions (the 23rd and 38th) as well as two engineer battalions. Other 7th AD units along the road included B/87th RCN, detachments from the 814th TD and tanks from the 31st TB. The 23rd AIB lost over 200 missing, the 38th AIB also reported over 200 missing. LTC Riggs, who commanded the defenses before St. Vith on 17 December, was captured with an undetermined number of his soldiers. Troop B 87th RCN came out under the leadership of 1SG Hoyle H. Ladd. Ladd brought out thirty-five soldiers of the original six

officers and 136 enlisted men. See, AARs of 23rd AIB, 38th AIB, 87th RCN, 31st TB and 814th TD. See also, Cole, The Ardennes, p. 406. Cole suggests 600 officers and men were lost. The figure cited in this study is probably low. Re: 1SG Ladd see, William D. Ellis, and Col. Thomas J. Cunningham, Jr., Clarke of St. Vith, (Cleveland, Ohio: Dillon/Liederbach, 1974), p. 121.

⁸³814th TD AAR December 1944, p. 3.

⁸⁴7th AD AAR December 1944, p. 12.

⁸⁵Manteuffel, MS# B-151a, p. 43.

Chapter 3

THEY COME BACK IN ALL HONOR

BBC Broadcast: "The brightest spot along the Western Front
is St. Vith."
GI in CCB 9th AD: "If this is a bright spot what the hell is
going on everywhere else!"

Hasbrouck's painfully constructed defenses unraveled the night of 21 December. Clarke's command faced crisis after crisis as the exultant Germans poured into St. Vith. The 190th VGR of the 62nd VGD hastened west towards Neubruck through a gap between Clarke and Hoge. The Germans fought with enthusiasm. Not only, did they sense victory, but they very much wanted to oust the Americans from the warm, dry barns and farmhouses around St. Vith. North of Clarke, the Fuhrer Escort Brigade maneuvered tanks and infantry towards Rodt. If the Brigade took Rodt it would flank Clarke's hasty defense west of St. Vith. When appraised of the loss of St. Vith, Ridgway ordered Hasbrouck to pull back the two infantry regiments defending the southeast quadrant of the perimeter. Reid's 424th and Nelson's 112th struggled back towards Beho in a blinding snow storm with only moderate pressure from the 164th and 190th Regiments of the 62nd VGD. That same night Hasbrouck learned that Stone's troops, who had already identified two regiments of the 560th VGD in their area, had now captured an engineer reconnaissance team from the 2nd SS Panzer. According to a captured SS officer, Das Reich was moving to attack across the rear of the 7th AD.¹

Clarke's "defenses" hardly deserved that description. His new "line" consisted of little more than straggler collection points which Erlenbusch and LTC Robert L. Rhea had established as a means of orienting the withdrawing troops. Both the 28th and 38th AIB had lost nearly half of their troops. The 38th also lost its commander, LTC William Fuller, who was evacuated for exhaustion on 22 December. Most of the missing had been captured. Among them were MAJ Don Boyer, who had helped get things organized on the first day, and LTC Tom Riggs. The confusion had reached the point that one of Clarke's staff officers, who was controlling traffic in Crombach, directed a German motorized infantry unit through town before he realized who they were. Still, most of CCB had gotten out of St. Vith. The 18th VGD's chief of staff commented with grudging admiration that "not only had the enemy safely withdrawn, but he had taken along his weapons and equipment, a remarkable achievement under the circumstances."²

Despite Oberstleutenant Moll's accolades, the troops in the St. Vith salient faced serious problems. Some of the defenders literally ran out of food. The artillery had as few as eight rounds remaining per tube. The 82nd had reached the Salm but held only a small neck of ground from Salmchateau to Vielsalm. Even that depended on whether Parker could hold the crossroads until the 82nd could consolidate its positions. To Hasbrouck it looked like the game was up unless he could get the Division out of the

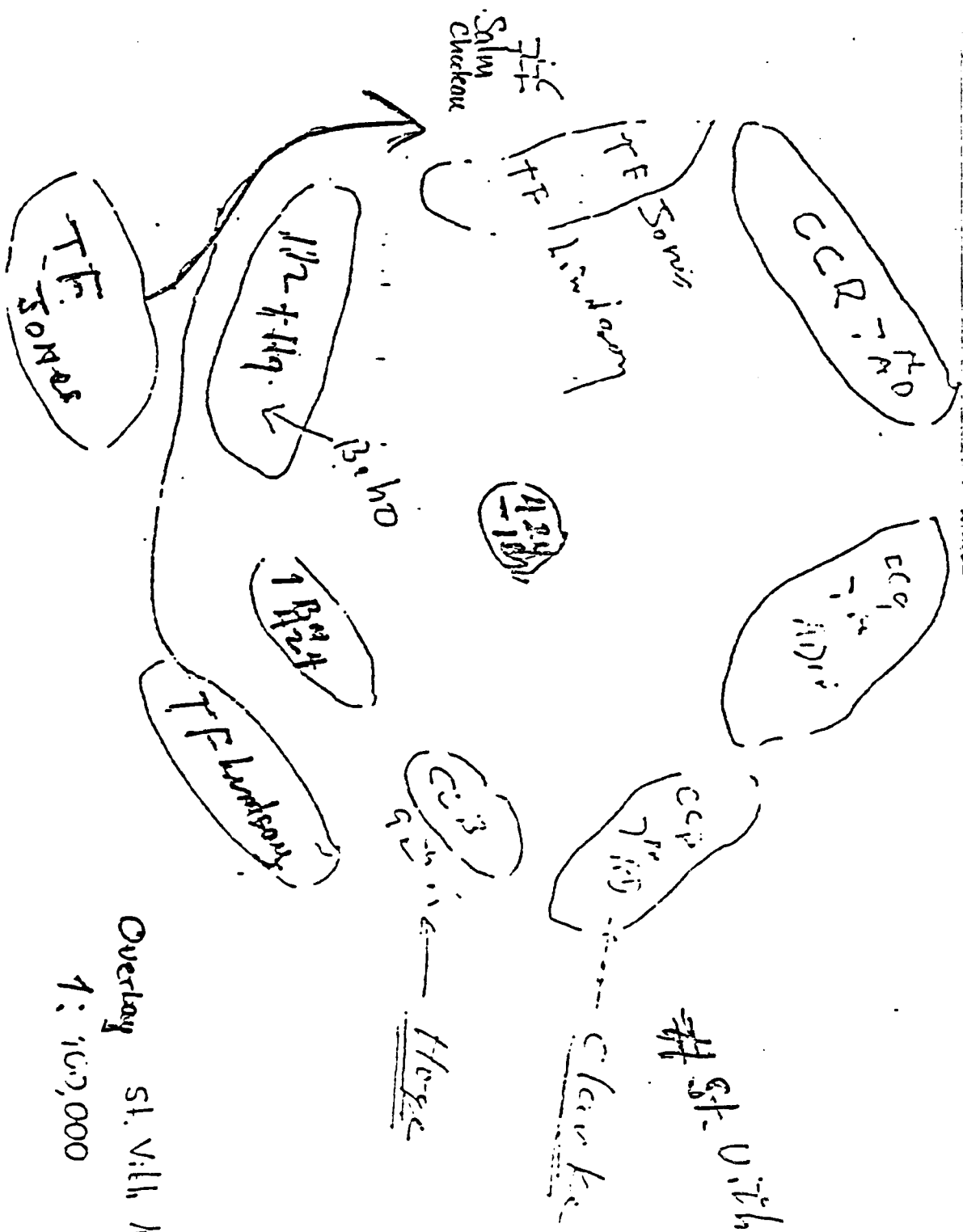
pocket. Ridgway saw things differently. Ridgway realized that the Germans would probably encircle the 7th, but he viewed that prospect with equanimity. Ridgway believed the troops in the pocket could hold out and be supplied by air until relieved. Accordingly, he sent Hasbrouck instructions and an overlay directing the creation of a "fortified goose egg."³

At daybreak, Hasbrouck conferred with Clarke about Ridgway's plan. Both considered it ill-advised. Clarke, never known for circumspection, described it as "Custer's last stand."⁴(See Map 7) Hasbrouck made his views known to Ridgway in a letter sent to XVIII Corps that same morning. In it, General Hasbrouck advised his corps commander that if the 7th was not withdrawn it would cease to exist. He further added that he believed his division would be of greater use if it joined the line of resistance Ridgway was building on the northern shoulder of the penetration. Hasbrouck had also shown the XVIII Corps plan to Montgomery's liaison officer who had arrived at the 7th's tactical command post in Vielsalm that morning. There is some reason to believe that Ridgway considered Hasbrouck's tone defeatist. In any case, General Ridgway arrived in Vielsalm at noon to assess the situation for himself. The Corps Commander spent the rest of the day east of the Salm visiting, as he put it, "the principal bigwigs."⁵

To his credit, Ridgway thoroughly familiarized himself with the situation in the pocket. This included conferring

MAP 7: The Island Defense (court-
esy of General Bruce C.
Clarke)

Born



Overlay St. Vitt. Map
1:100,000

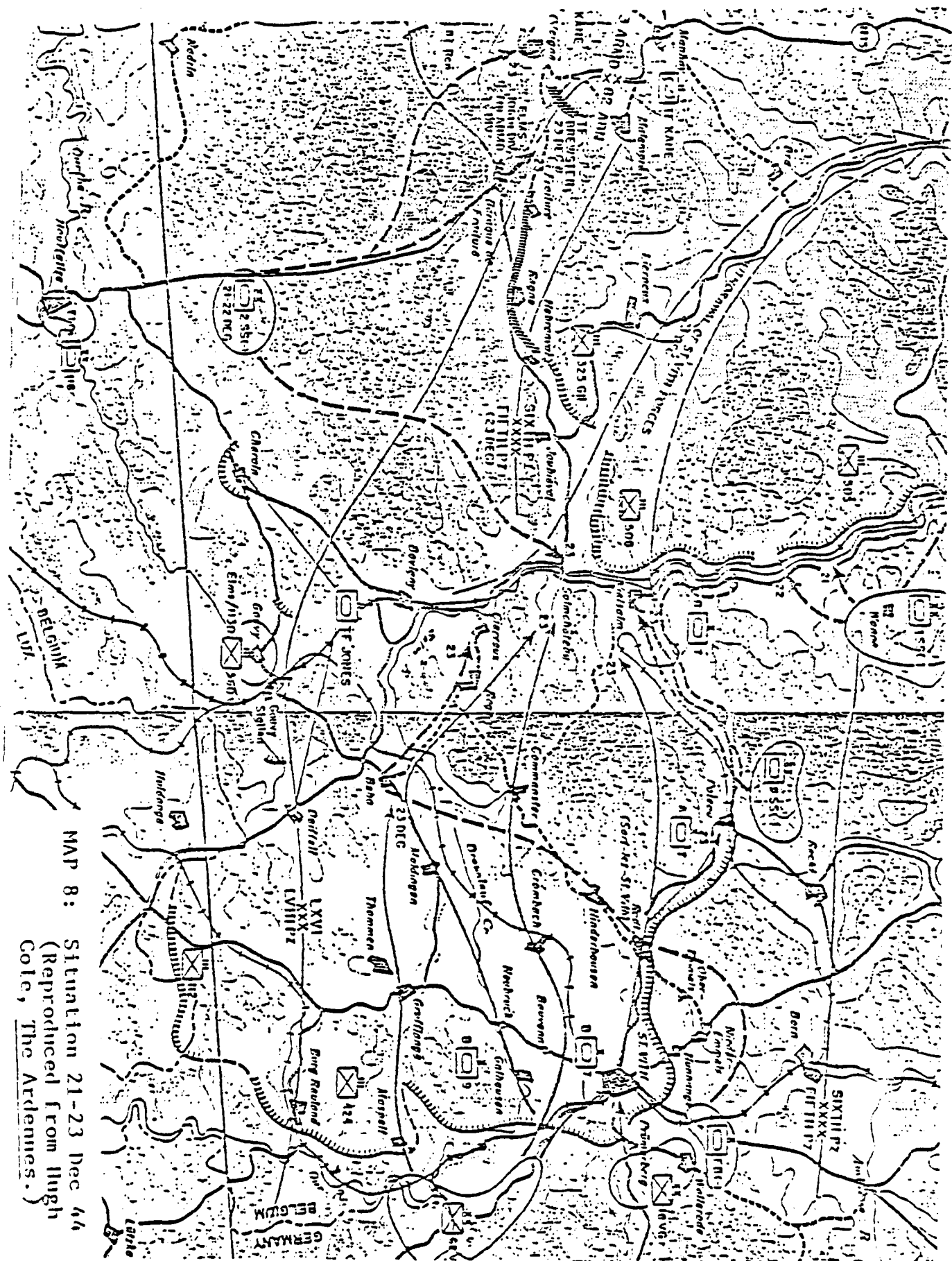
with General Hoge whom he had known as a cadet. Hasbrouck believes Hoge convinced Ridgway that the Division should be withdrawn. Clarke considers that Montgomery made the difference. In fact, Montgomery ordered Hodges to withdraw the 7th AD. Clarke's assessment is unfair to Ridgway who decided, at about 1900 that night, to relieve General Jones, the only commander in the pocket who thought the island defense might work. Ridgway placed Hasbrouck in command of all the troops in the pocket. Revealingly, he appointed Hoge assistant to Hasbrouck. He further directed Hasbrouck to withdraw from the pocket and reported to Hodges' chief of staff that "everything is all right" in the pocket and that the commanders in the pocket "should do exactly as they are doing, and [I] ordered them to do so."⁶

Having decided withdrawal was the proper course, General Ridgway wanted it done the night of 22 December. Hasbrouck, however, could not comply with Ridgway's wishes. Deciding to withdraw and being able to do it are not the same thing. The Germans had kept the pressure on all day. In the north the Fuhrer Escort Brigade had taken Rodt. The 62nd had captured Neubruck, including the command post and staff of Hoge's 27th AIB. The 14th TB had retaken the command post and rescued the shaken survivors, but Hoge needed to stabilize his defenses before he could organize a withdrawal. Clarke needed time to reestablish unit integrity before he could withdraw. Finally, the roads out were a mess. On 21 December, Clarke had started to corduroy

the forest trail leading to the west, but it remained nearly impassable. When General Clarke reconnoitered the "road" on 22 December his jeep became mired so badly that it took twelve soldiers to help him get it unstuck (See Map 8).⁷

The troops between the Salm and St. Vith needed time and some help from the weather to stabilize their position if they were to escape the ring closing about them. They also urgently needed resupply. Fuel and ammunition had been consumed at a prodigious rate. Consequently, the 7th had devoted 22 December to cleaning up the area, a task which involved rousting out enemy infantry from their rear, tightening the lines, reestablishing a coherent defense and resupplying. Acting on his own accord, COL Adams and the Division Trains got a resupply convoy through the narrowing corridor into the salient. Thirty-one ammunition trucks, five trucks of gasoline, and 4,000 rations arrived in Salmchateau, where they were greeted with high enthusiasm. The convoy provided its own escort of combat vehicles returning from maintenance and delivered thirteen badly needed vehicles to the Division, including tank retrievers and half-tracks.⁸

Division artillery expressed its gratitude for the 5,000 rounds it received by pumping 2888 of them at the oncoming Germans. Behind the cover provided by the combat elements, the service troops evacuated non-essential vehicles and equipment including seven 8" howitzers and their prime movers abandoned on 17 December by an VIII Corps



MAP 8: Situation 21-23 Dec 44
(Reproduced from Hugh
Cole, The Ardennes.)

unit. Hasbrouck spent the evening of 22 December developing and disseminating his plan which, in some cases, did not reach the forward units until 0600 the next morning. Hasbrouck, who had never had to do this before, felt his two years at Leavenworth "helped me out a lot. I knew what I had to do."⁹

His plan required units in the center to begin the withdrawal, while flanking units collapsed in toward the center where the process would be repeated until everyone crossed the river either at Salmchateau or Vielsalm. The Division designated three routes. In the north, CCR would use the road from Petit-Thier. CCA would also use this route and would pass through CCR. Hoge's command was to pass through TF Jones in the south. CCB 7th AD would move almost due west once Hoge had cleared and the 424th would follow. Hasbrouck established two covering forces. In the center, LTC Vincent L. Boylan, commanding the 87th, controlled the mobile covering force consisting of a tank company, a tank destroyer company, and an infantry company. COL Nelson's 112th Infantry constituted the stationary covering force. Hasbrouck ordered Nelson not to withdraw until specifically authorized to do so. Essentially, the plan had the Division withdrawing like a sock being turned inside out--as the center pulled back, the flanks would fold in and follow the center out.¹⁰

Consisting of only two pages, the withdrawal order suggested simplicity, but no one in the pocket labored under

the assumption that it would be easy. The Division artillery journal claimed that this kind of operation was "considered impossible by the best masters of warfare."¹¹ Furthermore, close enemy contact required Clarke and Hoge to ask for a delay. Hasbrouck acquiesced to a start time of 0600. Consequently, this difficult operation would be conducted in daylight and under pressure. A worried Hasbrouck, further directed that officers be stationed at "all key points to control the withdrawal and assure its continuing under what adverse conditions might turn up."¹²

Even though Hasbrouck had systematically stripped units from the shrinking perimeter and pushed them into the center, the Germans continued to press both Hoge and Clarke through the night. During 22 December the Fuhrer Escort Brigade made serious inroads against the left flank. Pushing out of St. Vith, the 18th VGD found the going difficult, but kept Clarke's attention focused on them and not on withdrawing. The 62nd, unhampered by the congestion in St. Vith, got one regiment into Neubruck during the day. The 164th VGR took Thommen, Grufflingen and Auf Dem Gericht during the night which prevented Hoge from breaking his command loose. Hoge kept them at bay with artillery bombardment which, in the words of the 164th's regimental commander, was "precise."¹³ Hasbrouck knew that the 2nd SS was hammering at "Parker's Crossroads" and felt his confidence ebb as the night wore on. Shortly before 0600 he radioed Clarke and Hoge to tell them the situation had deteriorated to the

point that, "It will be necessary to disengage whether circumstances are favorable or not if we are to carry out any kind of withdrawal with equipment."¹⁴

Fortunately, the 164th ground to a halt about 0600, allowing Hoge to start disengaging at 0700 by "echelons from the left side."¹⁵ In addition to his combat command, Hoge brought out part of the 424th which had been attached to him. As many as fourteen infantrymen rode out on a single tank.¹⁶ Once CCB broke contact, it got out without incident as did the 424th and 112th infantry regiments using 100 trucks scrounged by the 7th AD. In the north, things did not work out nearly so well. The 9th SS attacked CCA as it began its move. Fortunately, the "Hohenstaufen" division also accidentally attacked the 18th VGD moving up from St. Vith. CCA was able to get out, though German tanks came within 100 feet of the tanks of the rearguard. CCR followed with less difficulty thanks to help from the Air Corps which came out in force on the first clear day since the fighting had begun.¹⁷

Clarke also benefitted from the change in the weather. During the night a high moved in from the east bringing clear weather and a hard freeze. This good fortune led Clarke to conclude, "The good Lord had us by the hand when he gave us the freeze the night of 22 December."¹⁸ But, Clarke still had problems. The word had not gotten down to everyone. LTC Wemple, commanding the 17th TB, did not receive the order until 0600. Wemple "immediately

issued orders over the radio for the withdrawal of [his] forces." However, Wemple had to go east of Crombach, where his battalion had been defending, before he could get on the escape route. The 17th came out of Crombach with its tanks firing in all directions. Despite losing three tanks, the 17th reached the road and headed west.¹⁹

The covering force also encountered problems. LTC Boylan had a tank company, a tank destroyer company, and an infantry company to cover Clarke's withdrawal. Clarke ordered him to hold north and east of Hinderhausen so CCB could withdraw via Hinderhausen, Commanster, and Vielsalm. But, when Boylan arrived to take command of the force, part of it had already started to follow CCB toward Commanster. Boylan roused the assigned units out of the line of march and into position east of Commanster, but failed to retrieve the tank company which continued on towards Vielsalm. Nevertheless, Boylan's remaining companies delayed, maintaining contact with the Germans through successive positions west of Commanster. After a rough start, CCB cleared the area and crossed the Salm at Vielsalm.²⁰

Boylan then broke contact and withdrew towards Vielsalm until, at mid-afternoon, he encountered the last roadblock established by the 112th Infantry about two and a half miles east of Vielsalm. Boylan deployed the covering force into a hasty defensive position while he went into Vielsalm to establish that everyone was out. At Vielsalm, he discovered

that Hasbrouck and most of the CP were still in town with nothing between them and the advancing Germans but his force and a the detail from the 112th. After radioing his executive officer to hold in place, Boylan reconnoitered toward Salmchateau where he found the Germans in residence. Returning to Vielsalm, he established blocking positions on the north and south sides of the town and ordered a cavalry platoon back towards Commanster to reestablish contact with the Germans. The covering force then held this small pocket until the CP cleared. At 1925 LTC Boylan crossed after the last of his own troops.²¹

Boylan's operation was textbook-perfect compared to the problems TF Jones and the 112th experienced. LTC Jones started his withdrawal at 1430 after CCB 9th AD, the 424th, and the 112th had cleared his area. North of him at Cierreux, the 112th held a blocking position through which Jones had to pass after leaving Bovigny. At Cierreux things went awry. The 62nd VGD had reached the Salm at Salmchateau and were nearing Cierreux as was the Fuhrer Escort Brigade which had driven southeast of Boylan's positions. The Fuhrer Escort Brigade drove Nelson's covering force into Cierreux by 1530. To combat the Brigade's tanks, Nelson had only four tank destroyers. The tank destroyer crews fought with determination, but Nelson, who could no longer contact Hasbrouck, believed he had to withdraw. Accordingly, Nelson ordered the withdrawal of the covering force at 1600 believing Jones had cleared

the area. Not far ahead, LTC Jones led his task force toward Salmchateau, hoping to get through the town and over its bridge before the Germans caught up.²²

Jones moved north, as yet unaware the Germans had cut off his escape. The Germans were also closing the doors to the south and west with the 2nd SS. LTC Jones learned the bitter facts when his attached artillery, the 440th AFA, moving ahead of him and successfully ran the gauntlet at Salmchateau by racing through the town firing on the move. The 440th passed through their "startled enemy" and "roared over the bridge".²³ Recovering their composure, the 62nd VGD stopped the rest of the column on the road south of Salmchateau. Here, Jones had the Salm on his left and high ground on his right. As the light waned, the Germans began picking off vehicles in the two columns. By nightfall, Jones alone had lost nine.

Jones and Nelson searched frantically for a ford while the Germans continued to pick off their soldiers and vehicles. At 2300 the remnants of the two commands crossed the Salm on a route reconned by Jones' S-2. Jones had lost eleven more vehicles. After crossing the Salm, the two units struck out to the northwest from the vicinity of the village of Proverderoux. The ground was marshy, forcing the infantry to abandon most of its trucks; but the column continued with infantrymen clinging to every protuberance on the tanks, tank destroyers and a few trucks. One trucker, who declined to leave his truck, took out more than fifty soldiers. At

0300, after a four-hour trek which covered less than five miles, the two commands reached the road where the German tanks promptly attacked the head of the column. Jones' troops, at the head of the column, fought the Germans off, trading four tank destroyers for four tanks. Finally, the bedraggled survivors passed through the 82nd and into assembly areas.²⁴

Throughout the withdrawal the artillery fired continuously. The 7th's three organic battalions fired 5038 rounds in 172 missions. The 440th AFA, supporting TF Jones, fired 600 rounds in the last phase of the withdrawal and then fought its way through Salmchateau. LT Schwartz, one of the 440th's forward observers, formed part of Jones' rear guard and kept up a steady call for missions. Schwartz fought until the Germans destroyed his tank as he crossed the Salm.²⁵ Division artillery had insured continuous support of the withdrawal by positioning its battalions and the two attached battalions throughout the depth of the sector. Careful positioning, coupled with sustained fire, proved critical both during the disengagement and the withdrawal.

Despite having had little time to coordinate, the withdrawing troops passed through the 82nd with few problems. Hasbrouck recalled the 82nd as a "very cooperative outfit."²⁶ Corps established routes and assembly areas and the 82nd gave road priority to Hasbrouck's troops. Remarkably, the passage of the better part of two divisions

occurred through only two passage points and with no more than twelve hours between the decision and the beginning of the withdrawal. The only major problem occurred at the Vielsalm bridge. The 82nd had prepared the bridge for demolition, but when Hasbrouck ordered the bridge dropped nothing happened. General Hasbrouck put his own engineers on the job. The 7th's Engineers blew the bridge and gratefully passed on through the 82nd.²⁷

The survivors from the St. Vith salient arrived at their assembly areas exhausted and well-used during the early morning hours of 24 December. During the previous week they had fought against eight different German divisions and the Fuhrer Escort Brigade. At no time did they face less than three divisions. The 7th's G-2 estimated the troops in the pocket had confronted as many as 500 tanks during that week and as many as five regiments of infantry. But, the G-2 knew the Germans were interested in more than St. Vith exclusively. Indeed, Hasbrouck felt fortunate that the Germans seemed bent on moving west rather than reducing the small bulge at St. Vith. Nonetheless, the G-2 asserted that the defenders "interrupted to a certain extent" the German time table.²⁸

The battle and subsequent withdrawal from St. Vith had been neither textbook perfect nor without cost. In the official history, Hugh Cole reckoned that the four combat commands and the two infantry regiments crossed the Salm with perhaps 100 tanks and 15,000 troops. The 7th lost

roughly half of its tanks. Hoge's tank battalion lost thirteen tanks. The 14th CAV had lost slightly more than half of their light tanks. Counting forward observer tanks and assault gun variants, the defenders must have lost about 150 of their authorized strength of 250 tanks. The two infantry regiments each began the battle with over 3,000 troops. The 424th sustained over 1,000 casualties. The 112th fared little better. Two of the 7th's Armored Infantry Battalions lost roughly half of their soldiers as casualties. No numbers are available for the various service units, but they, too, had helped pay the bill.²⁹

Consequently, the first order of business before the commanders of these units was the reconstitution of their combat power. Hasbrouck immediately set about building fighting units from the remnants that he retained. By 26 December the 87th RCN, in combination with 14th CAV, raised a single composite squadron from the ashes of the three decimated cavalry squadrons. Hasbrouck could do little for his tank battalions; thus, the 17th TB had to make do with only twenty-nine of its authorized seventy-five tanks. Despite the high loss of tanks the tank battalions had lost relatively few people. Hence, Hasbrouck used tankers to bolster temporarily the much weakened infantry battalions. Indeed, the 17th TB gave up ninety-six trained tank crewmen to reconstitute the 23rd AIB. Only the artillery remained relatively unscathed.³⁰

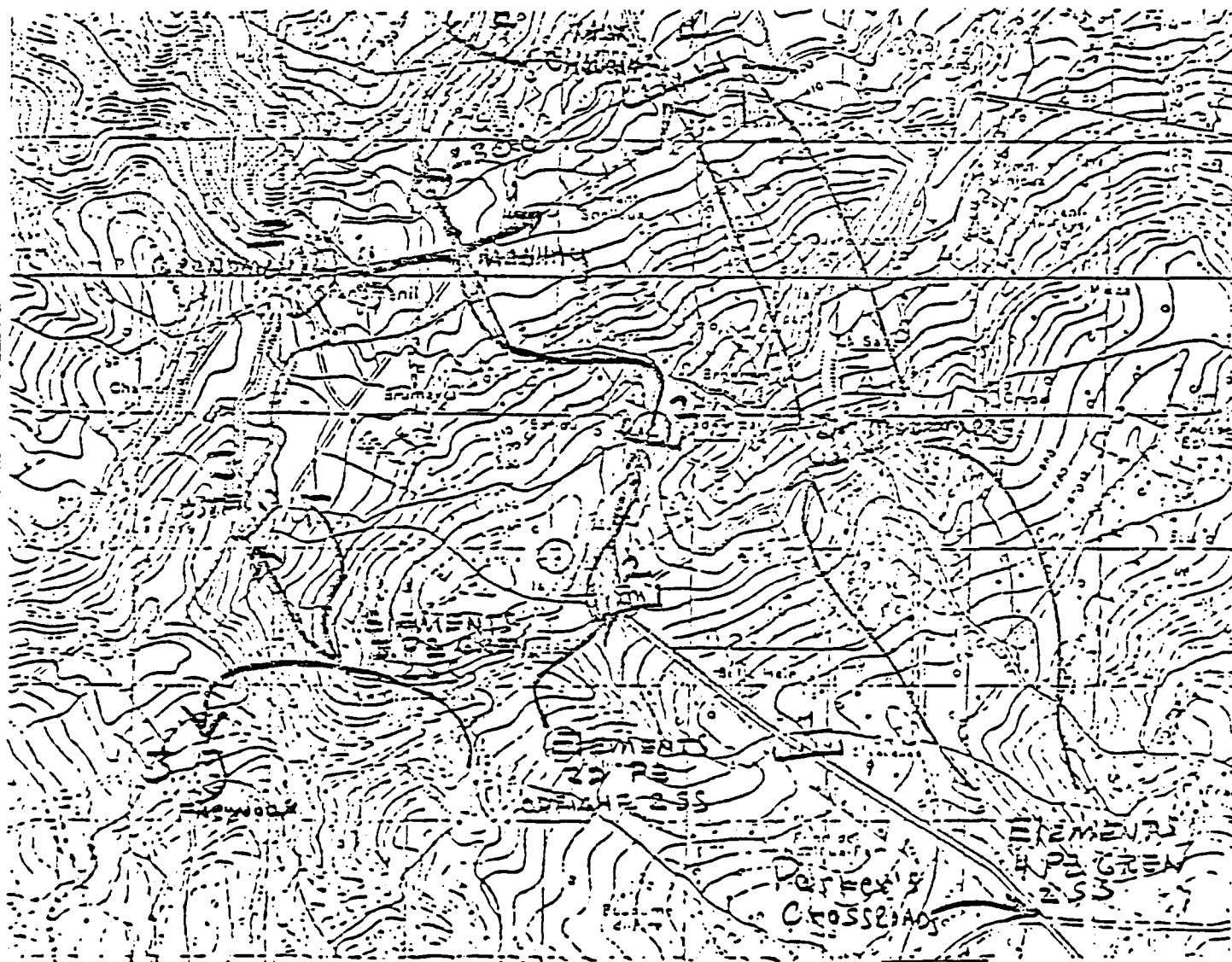
Given its condition and efforts, the Lucky Seventh richly deserved a rest. Unfortunately, the situation precluded any respite. On the morning of 24 December, General Ridgway ordered the shop-worn legions of the 7th back into the line to provide some depth to the fragile defenses along the Salm. CCA moved south of Manhay and occupied positions astride the highway to Liege to prevent the 2nd SS from continuing up the highway from "Parker's Crossroads". The 40th TB, the least damaged of the tank battalions, formed CCA's chief bulwark. The 48th AIB provided the shells of three armored infantry companies. One company of the 814th rounded out CCA's assets.³¹ The remainder of the Division occupied positions to back up CCA and started rebuilding.

Even as the tankers and infantrymen of COL Rosebaum's combat command moved into their positions astride the Odeigne-Manhay road and in Malempre, XVIII Corps ordered new dispositions in accordance with Field Marshal Montgomery's desires to shorten the line of the northern shoulder. The new plan envisaged a continuous front with the 82nd on line from Trois Ponts to Vaux Chavanne where they would tie in with the 7th. Hasbrouck's division would hold the high ground just north of the Vaux Chavanne-Manhay-Grandmenil line. From Grandmenil the 3rd AD would extend the line to the west using its units and part of the 75th ID.³²

These instructions required the execution of several complex evolutions. First, the 82nd had to withdraw from

the Salm line westwards and then wheel to the north, pivoting on Trois Ponts. CCB 9th AD, located forward of the 7th, would then pass through Manhay from the east and on to reserve positions. Third AD's TF Brewster (composed of two airborne infantry companies, one armored infantry platoon and seven tanks), located straight south of CCA 7th AD and near Odeigne, had to retire through CCA and then through Manhay heading west. Finally, CCA would withdraw north to join the Division on the new line running through Manhay. The Corps order arrived at 1800. CCA, the last unit to move, had orders to begin its move at 2200. Barely four hours were allowed to coordinate the movement of units from three divisions assigned to XVIII Corps and 3rd AD which belonged to VII Corps. The entire operation had to be accomplished in the presence of strong enemy forces including the 2nd SS Panzer Division (See Map 9).³³

While COL Rosebaum, commanding CCA, determined how to execute these orders, the 2nd SS Panzer marshalled its tank regiment and two infantry regiments in the vicinity of Odeigne. The 2nd SS which had been in Odeigne since shortly after it had overrun Parker's troops the afternoon of 23 December planned to attack at 2100 with its tank regiment on the road to Manhay. The two Panzer Grenadier regiments deployed on either side of the tanks. Even as the Germans moved out, Rosebaum called his battalion commanders to Manhay to give them their orders. In short order, the Germans bypassed TF Brewster, marched up the road towards



Legend:

1. TF Brewster at 2100
2. CCA Positions at 2100
3. 3rd AD Positions at 2100
4. 7th AD Positions forming about midnight

Map 9: Manhay 24 2100 Dec-
25 0100 Dec 1944

Manhay and slammed into A/40th TB as it was pulling out of its positions. Company A had seen the Germans coming; but since they knew that the 3rd AD was forward of them, they assumed the attackers were friendly until they started taking hits.³⁴

In the first seconds of this engagement, A Company lost four tanks to rockets launched by the Panzer Grenadiers. The surprised tankers fled up the road to Manhay with the Germans in hot pursuit. During the race up the road the SS destroyed four more Shermans. Company A's precipitate departure uncovered C Company on its left. Charlie Company nonetheless "fought the enemy as well as they could... but the enemy was in the shadow of the trees on their right flank...All that they could see to fire at were gun flashes...All of Company C was lost by AP fire." In fact, of the seventeen tanks in A and C Companies when the attack began, only three got out and two of these were damaged.³⁵

In Manhay itself, LTC John C. Brown, commander of the 40th TB, tried to stem the tide. Brown, in his command tank, together with the two remaining tanks in A Company, took the marauding Panthers under fire. Brown hoped to stop the Germans long enough to extract the remnants of his battalion and the 48th AIB from the cauldron in the town. By this time, the Germans were intermingled with the fleeing Americans. Panthers picked off three of D/40th TB's Stuarts as it departed Manhay heading for reserve positions. Though Brown's three tanks destroyed perhaps three of the Germans,

their efforts to stop the rout ended shortly after midnight when Brown was "blown out of his tank."³⁶

While Brown struggled to restore order, two further developments added to the chaos. The Germans reached Manhay as CCB 9th AD was moving through the town. Secondly, Panther #401, commanded by Ernst Barkmann, arrived at the crossroads in the center of town. Barkmann had become separated from his platoon commander when the regiment started out. He desired nothing more than to return to the bosom of his platoon and its officer. However, he had somehow gotten caught in the column of fleeing Americans. When he hit the crossroads his troubles increased. Barkmann arrived as the tanks of CCB 9th AD were moving through. Seeing no other choice he joined the column hoping the darkness would save him. At the west edge of town, Barkmann pulled off, turned around and with commendable gall headed back through town. All went well until an officer in a jeep noticed that #401 was a Panther. In the ensuing commotion, Barkmann ran over the jeep and got caught in the track of a passing Sherman. After much frantic lurching, shouting and shooting, Barkmann broke loose and moved south out of Manhay as fast as #401 would take him. In his wake, he left panic and confusion.³⁷

What remained of A, C, and D of the 40th TB continued to flee up the Manhay highway towards Liege until they reached a roadblock just north of the town established by LTC Robert L. Rhea and the 23rd AIB. Here, General Hasbrouck

rallied the Division around CCB 7th AD which rushed tanks into the area. The roadblock and the confusion combined to keep the 2nd SS in Manhay. Baker, of the 40th - Brown's last company, rejoined the Division after withdrawing cross country and then via the road to Werbomont. At Werbomont, Baker turned southwest and came into the new positions from the north. Brown stumbled into LTC Erlenbusch's CP, at the roadblock, on foot and dazed from the concussion suffered when his tank went up. LTC Brown reached Erlenbusch about 0100, "completely dazed, dirty and disheveled."³⁸ The same could be said of his battalion which lost twenty-two tanks in three hours.

Ridgway, who later termed the conduct of the 7th on 23 December "exemplary," described the Manhay battle as a "fiasco."³⁹ Since Manhay was critical to the Corps' position, Ridgway ordered Hasbrouck to launch an attack on 25 December to retake the crossroads and restore the line. Hasbrouck assigned the mission to Clarke and CCB. Clarke launched his attack with tanks and infantry on two axis. The attack, which began at 1450, was stillborn. Clarke's columns set off on two logging trails through dense forest intending to debouch close to Manhay. However, 3rd AD, in apparent disregard for the Corps boundary had mined one trail and placed an abatis on the other. In the first 400 yards US mines knocked out four Shermans. Clarke's other column halted at the abatis. Clarke's entire tank strength ground to a halt because of poor coordination

across division and corps boundaries. Finally, only the infantry, attached from the 424th, could go on. They reached Manhay but the Germans drove them off. Clarke, circling the debacle in a Piper Cub, later said, "I never had a Christmas as depressing as this one."⁴⁰ Ridgway, who observed the attack with Hasbrouck, considered 25 December a "really sad Christmas Day."⁴¹

Over the next few days a tired and chagrined 7th AD prevented the Germans from breaking out and rolling up the units forming the northern shoulder of the Bulge. The 7th held despite its greatly diminished combat power for three reasons. First, the Air Corps had come out with the clearing of the weather. Secondly, the artillery stopped strong German attacks on both 25 and 26 December by firing "TOT [time-on-target] after TOT." The Division's organic artillery pumped out 6,319 rounds on 26 December which "literally picked to pieces" the towns of Manhay and Vaux Chavanne.⁴² Finally, the German attacks from Manhay were not well-coordinated and after 26 December the Germans shifted their main effort to the west.

Though the 7th held firm on 25 and 26 December it could not retake Manhay alone. Not until 27 December, after the Germans had slipped their main effort to the west, did a battalion of the 517th PIR recapture Manhay. LTC Richard Seitz, who commanded the infantry, took the town using the rather unorthodox technique of following a rolling artillery barrage at a distance of fifty yards.

His technique was unorthodox because fifty yards was the bursting radius of the 105mm howitzers which fired the barrage.⁴³ The 7th's contribution to Seitz's assault took the form of two platoons of tanks and its ubiquitous artillery. The artillery dumped 9,780 rounds in support of the parachute infantry.⁴⁴

After retaking Manhay, the Division and its attachments, including 2nd Battalion of the 517th, reverted to the defensive until relieved by the 75th ID on 29 December. Designated Corps' reserve, the 7th (less its artillery which remained to support the 75th) moved into assembly areas in the vicinity of Werbomont where it licked its wounds and prepared to counterattack or reinforce on Corps order. On 3 January, the artillery rejoined the Division, parting company with Roy Clay's 275th, which had come looking for a job on 17 December and stayed through some tough times.

The 7th's performance from 23 December through the end of the month raises questions and suggests some insight on troublesome doctrinal issues as valid today as they were in 1944. The picture which emerges most clearly about mechanized warfare in 1944 is that engagements between mechanized forces were (and probably will be again) confused and confusing. Furthermore, plans and execution are two entirely different issues. Confusion and other forms of friction not only impeded the planning process, but also rendered execution difficult. The chief question which suggests itself is, when is a unit no longer combat

effective? Additionally, how does confusion and relative combat effectiveness affect the utility of the operational concepts of agility, initiative, depth and synchronization? Or, should this question be how do the operational concepts effect the capacity of units to overcome confusion and reduced effectiveness?

The withdrawal conducted on 23 December and the debacle at Manhay clearly reveal the extent to which confusion and friction effect planning and execution of retrograde operations. Since World War II, American authors have criticized Hitler's "hold at all costs" mentality, yet there is painfully little evidence that suggests any divergence between Adolf Hitler's views about withdrawal and those of the United States Army. Voluntarily ceding ground is not a US custom. In the current edition of FM 100-5 there are exactly six paragraphs which address withdrawal operations. That manual is careful in its choice of words. The American Army does not retreat. The euphemism for retreat in 100-5 is "reposition."⁴⁵ A withdrawal is a way of repositioning forces. "Retirement Operations" rate a single-sentence paragraph of thirty-seven-words. At least this paragraph is more honest about what retirement is. It describes retirement as a "rearward movement."⁴⁶

The first order that VIII Corps sent to the 106th during the battle required it to hold its positions "at all costs." Part of the reason Jones left two regiments in the Schnee Eifel is that he and Middleton never mentioned with-

drawal when they discussed the plight of the 106th on the night of 16 December. Apparently, neither man could bring himself to say the awful word. Yet, Middleton's biographer claims that Middleton believed that he had ordered the withdrawal of the two regiments.⁴⁷ The only written message Hasbrouck received from Middleton during the defense of St. Vith advised him to "hold your positions." Ridgway's response to Hasbrouck's appeal to bring out the 7th was to go see what was wrong at St. Vith. To his credit, Ridgway accepted reality once he saw it for himself. However, the 7th lost the daylight hours of 22 December while Ridgway convinced himself of the need to remove the 7th AD from harm's way. Some of the friction which impeded planning for the withdrawal stemmed, therefore, from an almost dogmatic reluctance to give up Belgian soil.

Though Hasbrouck had never conducted or practiced a withdrawal he had considered the problem during the course of his studies at the Command and General Staff College at Leavenworth. The Army then, as now, was not without a doctrine for withdrawal, however slim, but it was not very interested. As a consequence the withdrawal of the defenders from east of the Salm was an extemporized operation. Just as clearly, it succeeded despite poor communications because of the initiative of soldiers such as LTC Boylan and because Hasbrouck's subordinates understood the essence, or intent, of the withdrawal order. The response to the hastily contrived withdrawal showed considerable agility and

flexibility. More importantly, the Division succeeded, to a surprising degree, in synchronizing artillery fire with the requirements of the maneuver forces. Friction in the German camp provided the final factor enabling the defenders of St. Vith to withdraw. For example, the 13th VGD found it difficult to get out of St. Vith because the town became a bottleneck of bumper-to-bumper traffic from both Panzer armies on 22 December. Once clear of St. Vith, the 18th had trouble advancing because the Fuhrer Escort Brigade cut across its front. Finally, the 9th SS helped by enthusiastically attacking the 18th as it approached Poteau. The 62nd VGD was the sole German unit which only had to worry about Americans on 22 and 23 December. As a result the 62nd, which moved on its feet, kept up with the withdrawing Americans. Hence, the 62nd and the Fuhrer Escort Brigade nearly destroyed TF Jones and the covering force from the 112th.⁴⁸

General Ridgway correctly described the events of 24 December as "a fiasco." Ridgway ordered the XVIII Corps IG to investigate CCA's failure to retain the town and to learn why the 40th TB disintegrated. Ridgway need only have looked around him to see part of the problem. His own headquarters failed to coordinate boundaries and actions with 3rd AD which belonged to an adjacent Corps. As a consequence, the 7th AD, which had not yet been in Manhay twelve hours, knew only that Brewster was to its front. Ridgway's headquarters had the responsibility to direct

coordination with 3rd AD. Both TF Brewster from 3rd AD and the 82nd occupied positions forward of 7th AD which had become untenable. Yet, Montgomery had to require 1st Army to order Ridgway to shorten his lines.⁴⁹ In the end, orders reached 7th AD so late in the day that only four hours remained for both planning and execution. Moreover, the communication of orders from XVIII Corps to the 82nd went awry with the result that the 82nd released Hoge's command from attachment prematurely. Accordingly, Hoge arrived in Manhay at the most inopportune time possible.⁵⁰

None of this is mentioned in the report of General Ridgway's IG which concluded that CCA and its subordinate units deserved to be "officially castigated for their lack of aggressive spirit."⁵¹ More remarkable, the report contends that the Germans routed CCA with only four tanks. The 2nd SS Panzer Division hit CCA with its tank regiment and one of its grenadier regiments. The Panzer Grenadiers, in fact, destroyed nearly as many tanks as did the Panzer Regiment. Ridgway may have intuitively realized this when he discussed the matter with the 1st Army chief of staff. General Ridgway told General Kean that the disaster at Manhay occurred because there was insufficient infantry available to protect the tanks in the densely wooded region around Manhay. CCA did have three rifle companies forward of Manhay that night. Together they mustered only 295 rifles of an authorized strength of 245 each.⁵²

Mitigating factors aside, the performance of CCA on 24 December left a lot to be desired. Panic did ensue both south of Manhay and in the town itself. Ernst Barkmann's comic-opera performance further added to the confusion. Most of CCB 9th AD scattered as a result of Barkmann's impossible journey. As Barkmann left town several of his mates reached Manhay where they added to the chaos and destroyed four of Hoge's tanks. Confusion among Das Reich's units and quick action by LTC Rhea and Hasbrouck saved the situation. Nonetheless, panic did occur and for that CCA must bear the onus.

It is difficult to believe that the same division which fought so energetically and imaginatively before St. Vith should perform so ineffectively on 24 December. Christmas Eve was a prelude to an equally miserable Christmas Day. On that day the 7th reached its nadir. Clarke's attack to retake Manhay was almost laughable in its impotence. One of the two tank companies he used had only six tanks remaining. Neither could get out of the woods thanks to mines laid by the 3rd AD, still operating east of its boundary, and abatis emplaced either by the 3rd AD, as Clarke believes, or by retreating 7th AD tankers on the night of 24 December, as the official historian, Hugh Cole, believes. Given the panic in the 40th TB on Christmas Eve, it seems unlikely any of the 40th's tankers stopped to cut down trees. Again, the Corps boundary proved less than sacrosanct. Despite the 3rd AD, the attack could have fared better. Apparently, none

of the attacking units reconnoitered the route. Yet, this was the same division which won the grudging respect of its enemies in the previous week's fighting.

Obviously, the previous week had taken its toll both physically and mentally. How then should combat effectiveness be measured? By Christmas Day the 7th AD had fewer than 50% of its authorized tanks. Its infantry companies had been decimated. What remained of the infantry included tankers who had survived the destruction of their tanks. In the official history, Hugh Cole asserts that the 7th AD was perhaps 40% effective on 26 December. Commanders in World War II routinely estimated effectiveness as some fraction of 100%. But what did this mean? Effectiveness can not be measured by estimates which include only visible strengths such as the number of rifles or tanks remaining to a unit. Obviously, some subjective estimate of reliability of the troops and leadership must also be attempted. How effective, for example, was the 38th AIB which welcomed a new commander on Christmas Eve? When could Hasbrouck reasonably expect his provisional cavalry squadron, formed from the bones of three squadrons, to become effective? Finally, can a unit which is approaching combat ineffectiveness operate within the context of the operational concepts?

Both Ridgway and Hasbrouck appreciated that the 7th AD had limits on 24 December, but conditions precluded either rest or reconstitution. Each did what he had to do. Ridgway used the 7th because he had no choice and when he could he

stiffened it with fresh infantry. Hasbrouck did his best to reconstitute and rest units within the constraints of the mission. Hasbrouck also used his artillery lavishly to augment the weakened firepower of his units. Contemporary American soldiers must consider how, if faced with a similar set of circumstances, they will measure combat effectiveness and how they will employ seriously weakened units.

ENDNOTES: Chapter 3

¹For a detailed narrative of the night of 21-22 December see, Cole, The Ardennes, pp. 407-411.

²CCB 7th AD AAR December 1944, pp. 4-5. Re: Boyer see, Toland, Battle, pp. 192-193. On Riggs see, 106th ID Combat Interviews, MAJ Walter A. Marshal, Executive Officer 81st Engineer Battalion, et. al., 11 January 1945. Finally, see Moll, MS# B-688, p. 50.

³Cole, The Ardennes, pp. 407-413. See, Ridgway, Soldier, pp. 119-120. Ellis and Cunningham, Clarke, p. 127.

⁴Ellis and Cunningham, Clarke, p. 127.

⁵Ridgway Papers, War Diary, 2110 22 December 1944.

⁶Ibid. General Clarke states that Montgomery forced Ridgway to authorize the withdrawal of the 7th. Hasbrouck gives Montgomery his due, but believes that Hoge had convinced Ridgway that the withdrawal was necessary. See, Clarke Interview 20 August 1984 and Hasbrouck Interview 19 August 1944.

⁷Re: the loss of the 27th AIB Command Post see, AARs of CCB 9th AD, 27th AIB and 14th TB. Clarke began to corduroy roads on 21 December. See, Clarke Interview 20 August 1944. Toland, Battle, p. 215.

⁸7th AD Trains AAR December 1944, p. 2.

⁹7th AD Div Arty AAR December 1944, p. 17. The abandoned guns belonged to the 740th FA. The 434th AFA evacuated the guns on 21 December. See, 434th AFA AAR December 1944, p. 56. The 434th report does not stipulate the number of guns it recovered. General Ridgway, however, reported to 1st Army that seven guns had been brought out. Ridgway Papers, War Diary, 2110 22 December 1944. Hasbrouck Interview 19 August 1984.

¹⁰7th AD AAR December 1944, Annex No. 3A: Order for Withdrawal of 7th Armored Division West of Salm River.

¹¹7th AD Div Arty AAR December 1944, p. 18.

¹²Ibid. The last sentence of the withdrawal order admonished the command to ensure that each vehicle commander and driver understand that success would depend on the ability "to keep traffic rolling uninterrupted." See, 7th AD AAR December 1944, Annex No. 3A, p. 2.

¹³MacDonald Papers, see Arthur Juttner, Commander 164th Volks Grenadier Regiment, in the Alte Kammeraden (undated translation). Juttner captured a copy of Hasbrouck's order to Jones which required Jones to hold Beho. Armed with this intelligence, Juttner interdicted the Beho road with artillery on 23 December.

¹⁴7th AD AAR December 1944, p. 15.

¹⁵Hoge interview.

¹⁶CCB 9th AD AAR December 1944, p. 10.

¹⁷Cole, The Ardennes, pp. 407-422 and 40th TB AAR December 1944, p. 10. See also, Moll, MS# B-688, p. 53.

¹⁸Clarke interview 20 August 1984.

¹⁹Letter COL John P. Wemple to MAJ Gregory Fontenot dated 4 September 1984.

²⁰87th RCN AAR December 1944, pp. 8-10.

²¹Ibid.

²²Cole, The Ardennes, pp. 407-422. See also, 814th TD AAR December 1944, pp. 2-3. See also, Nelson interview.

²³Cole, The Ardennes, p. 421.

²⁴814th TD AAR December 1944, pp. 2-3. See also, 440th AAA AAR December 1944, p. 12.

²⁵The 440th AFA had moved to the vicinity of Salmchateau on 22 December. The battalion supported the withdrawal of TF Jones from a position area near the town. At 1400 the 440th withdrew through Salmchateau under primarily indirect fire. LT Schwartz was not injured when the Germans got his third tank. 440th AFA AAR December 1944, p. 5.

²⁶Hasbrouck interview 19 August 1944.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸7th AD AAR December 1944, G-2 Notes, pp. 14-18.

²⁹7th AD AAR December 1944, Annex No. 1, pp. 1-2. It is impossible to determine just how many tanks the 7th AD, 14th CAV and CCB 9th AD lost. Of the 7th AD tank battalions, the 40th TB fared best. The 40th lost sixteen tanks during the battle east of the Salm. The 17th TB crossed the Salm

with only thirty-three of its authorized seventy-five tanks and assault guns. The 31st TB AAR contains no reckoning of its losses; but, B Co had only six of its eighteen tanks remaining. The other companies apparently fared no better. The 14th CAV reported the loss of 53% of all of its vehicles. Finally, the 14th TB of CCB 9th AD reported losing fourteen M-4s. See, AARS of 14th TB, 17th TB, 31st TB, 40th TB and 14th CAV. See also, AARS of 23rd AIB, 38th AIB and 424th Infantry.

³⁰17th TB AAR December 1944, pp. 15-16. See also, 87th RCN AAR December 1944, pp. 11-12. The composite squadron had six Troops per the standard table of organization. However, each of the Troops remained understrength.

³¹CCA 7th AD AAR December 1944, pp. 2-3.

³²Cole, The Ardennes, pp. 578-590.

³³Ibid. In fact, II SS Panzer Corps was moving in with the 2nd SS Panzer and the 9th SS Panzer Divisions.

³⁴At the time it was believed that TF Brewster had withdrawn without informing 7th AD. Ibid., p. 589. See also, 40th TB AAR December 1944, pp. 10-13.

³⁵40th TB AAR December 1944, pp. 13-14.

³⁶Ibid., p. 14. Brown's roadblock may have provided the nucleus for later efforts. CPT Walter J. Hughes, one-time co-defender of Gouvy, was killed during the fracas at Manhay when his tank struck a "friendly" mine.

³⁷MacDonald Papers, Weidinger, Das Reich, pp. 374-382.

³⁸Toland Papers, undated interview with LTC Robert C. Erlenbusch. Brown apparently wandered about, in shock, from about midnight until 0300.

³⁹Ridgway Papers, Letter Matthew B. Ridgway to James M. Gavin dated 6 October 1978. See also, Letter Matthew B. Ridgway to William G. Kean dated 25 December 1944.

⁴⁰Toland Papers, Undated Interview with General Bruce C. Clarke.

⁴¹Ridgway Papers, Ridgway to Kean, 25 December 1944.

⁴²7th AD Div Arty AAR December 1944, pp. 21-23.

⁴³Clay interview 23 August 1944.

⁴⁴7th AD Div Arty AAR December 1944, pp. 21-23.

⁴⁵FM 100-5 Operations, pp. 12-8--12-9.

⁴⁶Ibid., 12-9.

⁴⁷Frank J. Price, Troy H. Middleton: A Biography, (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1974), p. 216. Price implies that Middleton told Jones to withdraw the two regiments. There is no evidence to support such a conclusion.

⁴⁸The LXVI Corps commander spent 22 and 23 December in a high dudgeon because he found it practically impossible to get his 18th VGD and Corps Artillery moving. He finally appointed his Corps Artillery CG as the traffic manager in ST. Vith. See, Lucht, MS# B-333, p.15. The 9th SS and 2nd SS belonged to II SS Panzer Corps. These two divisions were supposed to attack the Manhay-Werbomont line. The 2nd SS had moved all the way around the St. Vith salient. The 9th SS had tried to move directly west via Poteau. But, on 26 December the 9th SS still had not gotten into position on the right flank of the 2nd SS. The Fuhrer Escort Brigade cut south from Rodt on 23 December and thus right across the path of the 18th VGD.

⁴⁹Cole, The Ardennes, pp. 586-587.

⁵⁰Ridgway Papers, XVIII Corps Inspector General, Report of Investigation, "CCA 7th AD, Manhay, 24-25 December 1944", 6 January 1945, p. 4.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 5. This remarkable document claims CCA was "partially routed" by "four tanks and a few infantrymen." See, p. 1. It further asserts that part of the problem was that CCA had just "completed a withdrawal." Withdrawals, according to the report, were "calculated to lower morale." See, p. 4. Yet, though the report recommends "castigation" of CCA, it asserts that "primary blame for this debacle apparently rests with the 3rd Armored Division." See, p. 2.

⁵²Ibid., p. 4.

Chapter 4

THE ROAD BACK

"...we have taken the town of Hunningen and Neider-Emmels, and St. Vith is about to fall. We are soon to avenge our recent withdrawal."

440th AFA Journal

On Christmas Eve 1944, Hasso von Manteuffel concluded that the grandiose goals of the German counteroffensive could not be attained. The Americans and their allies had reacted quickly, more quickly than any of the German planners had anticipated. Patton's 3rd Army threatened the southern edge of the penetration. In the north, the Americans had achieved at least the semblance of a line which extended to the Meuse. West of the Meuse, the British XXX Corps had arrived. Against this Manteuffel had only one badly over-extended division, the 2nd Panzer, close to the river. Thanks to the stand of the 7th Armored Division at St. Vith his follow-on forces were far behind schedule. Finally, Bastogne, which Manteuffel bypassed enroute to the Meuse, remained in the determined hands of the 101st Airborne and elements of the 10th Armored Division.¹ Opportunities remained, but they grew dimmer with each hour. The culminating point of Hitler's last offensive had arrived.

But, if Manteuffel had no reason to be sanguine about the future neither did Brigadier General Robert W. Hasbrouck and the 7th Armored Division. On Christmas Eve, Hasbrouck and his division were tired, bedraggled, and taking a thrashing at the hands of the 2nd SS Panzer Division. Not

until the night of 29 December when the 75th ID relieved the "Lucky Seventh" did the picture seem brighter. The 7th AD gratefully moved into reserve positions in the Werbomont area where they could anticipate some chance of resting and refitting. General Hasbrouck learned in a commander's meeting at XVIII Corps that the 7th's rest might be short. On New Year's Eve, Ridgway announced that XVIII Corps would counterattack on 3 January as part of a great attack by 1st and 3rd Armies to reduce the German salient. The meeting became animated after the Corps Commander made his announcement. General Ridgway believed there was a chance to destroy the remaining major German mobile forces in the West. He advised his subordinates that "...its going to be a bitter, savage fight like the Falaise gap all over again."² Ridgway's major concerns were that his Corps would not be making 1st Army's main effort and that the attack plan was not bold enough. First Army's attack aimed at cutting the German penetration at Houffalize. Ridgway believed the attack ought to aim at St. Vith. In Ridgway's view, if the attack went further east the Americans could be sure of cutting off the German armor. Still, the Airborne General remained confident and concluded the meeting by asserting "there isn't anything to stop this attack; it's just overwhelming."³

The 7th had been out of the line less than two days and could expect to return perhaps as early 3 or 4 January. After as little as a week out of the line the 7th had to be

ready to take the offensive with the rest of XVIII Corps. If the Division was to succeed, its units must quickly assimilate replacements and new equipment. Hasbrouck and his subordinate commanders also had to rekindle the spark which translates numbers into combat effectiveness. The 7th had shown agility, initiative, synchronization and effective use of depth until 24 December. It had some distance to go in a short time to recover its verve. In retrospect, the task before the 7th on 1 January seems incredible; yet those who accomplished that task shrug it off, noting only that they did what they had to do. What they had to do was considerable. On 1 January the Division mustered only 56% of its authorized medium tanks and 70% of its authorized soldiers. In the last two weeks of December the 7th lost 121 tanks, 13 tank destroyers, 72 halftracks and 164 other weapons systems or vehicles. The human cost reached 1,980 killed, wounded, missing or injured. Moreover, the Division did not incur these losses across the board. Some units suffered more than others. Fortunately, losses in the artillery battalions and service units were low. The tank battalions also sustained relatively few personnel casualties despite their high losses in tanks. Riflemen paid the bill for the 7th AD with the result that the infantry battalions marshalled less than two-thirds of their authorized strength in infantrymen. Cavalrymen also paid more than their fair share for the 7th's success at St. Vith.

Worse still, merely finding infantry and cavalry replacements would not suffice since the Germans had destroyed entire companies. Three troops of the 87th RCN had virtually ceased to exist. Of these, B Troop (the first of the 7th's units to go into the line at St. Vith) was probably in the worst shape. First Sergeant Hoyle Ladd, senior surviving man in the troop brought out only thirty-five soldiers when the Division withdrew across the Salm. B Troop never folded despite the loss of all of its officers, all of its platoon sergeants, and more than two-thirds of its soldiers. Units like B Troop had to be rebuilt from the platoon level up while conducting individual and platoon training concurrently with battalion-level training. Nor did these tasks relieve them of the need to maintain security and to prepare to execute any mission required of their parent battalions if XVIII Corps committed the Division.⁴

It would have eased the job if General Hasbrouck could have stood the Division down. During a mandated stand-down, the Division could plan its tasks sequentially and allot time efficiently. But, the Division still had a mission as the Corps reserve and had no idea how long it would be out of the line; so, it had to conduct refitting and retraining concurrently. On 1 January General Hasbrouck issued his guidance for the retraining of the Division to join the rest of XVIII Corps in its attack on Ridgway's order. Hasbrouck's estimate of the mission and the terrain determined the nature of the training. Accordingly, he:

ordered training in the use of small teams of infantry, tanks, and engineers. Where mass employment of tanks would be impossible, [almost everywhere in the Ardennes] these small teams could operate over roads or trails to gain the rear of the enemy forces to make surprise seizures of important road centers or defiles.⁵

General Hasbrouck further stipulated:

the tank component of these teams was to be small, rarely, if ever, over a platoon. The infantry component was to be comparatively large to provide reconnaissance and security for the tanks, while the engineers were for mine detection, removal of road blocks, and pioneer work.⁶

Thus, in days the worn-out battalions of the 7th AD had to be ready to conduct decentralized combined arms operations in closely compartmented terrain against anti-tank defenses protected by mines.

General Hasbrouck specified the training goals, but he let his subordinates decide how to achieve them while he continued to plan the employment of the Division. As he put it, "The unit commanders each did it in his own way. I couldn't prescribe any particular way for them to assimilate equipment and train troops. Some of them did a real good job and some of them did indifferent jobs, but when we went back on the line again we were in pretty good shape."⁷

However, General Hasbrouck did feel that he needed to initiate the incoming replacements, many of whom were surprised to find themselves in the Lucky Seventh. Many of the new soldiers had been in college, protected from the draft by the Army Specialization Training Program. These young men received basic training, but the Army never

intended to use them as combat arms replacements. According to General William A. Knowlton, then the new B/87th RCN Commander, these were "bright but scared kids--upset at being rocketed from the Ivy League to the battlefield."⁸

Other replacements arrived in the 7th trained as cooks or anti-aircraft artillerymen who, like their college colleagues, were not pleased with the turn of events which made them cavalrymen or infantrymen. Hasbrouck set up several "little reception centers" where new arrivals were indoctrinated on why they were needed and what the Division expected from them. From there, replacements joined their units where they learned their trade at the hands of soldiers such as 1SG Ladd and 1LT Knowlton.

Bringing in new equipment was only slightly less difficult. Shermans arrived in various conditions and configurations. The 7th already owned Shermans with 75mm and 76mm guns. Now they also received diesel-engined Shermans intended for use by the British. Fuel and engine requirements therefore changed, which gave COL Adams, in the Division Trains and the Ordnance Battalion, some new problems. Moreover, all of the tanks, new and old, were olive drab. With a foot of snow on the ground and more coming, OD green was not a desirable color. Accordingly, with the help of engineers from 1st Army, the Division painted all of its fighting vehicles white.

The tanks also needed to be modified so they could move on snow and ice. The Shermans, whether shod with rubber

cleats or steel track, behaved like "40 ton toboggans" on icy, snow-covered ground. The Division G-4 and the Division Ordnance officer devised a solution to this problem. They developed a cleat extension which could be welded onto "grousers" already in use. These would enable the tanks and self-propelled howitzers to maneuver on icy surfaces.⁹

Not surprisingly, there were not enough welding sets to accomplish this task quickly. Undaunted, someone in the 7th devised a way to wire two tank auxiliary generators ("Little Joes") together in a way which produced a reasonably effective if bizarre and dangerous electrical welder. Unfortunately, the Stuart tanks could not be modified in this way, but ingenuity triumphed here, too. LTC Erlenbush recalls that the 31st TB discovered that by driving the Stuarts through either barbed wire fence or entanglements, "the wire wove itself around the track and the track connectors and provided a reasonable amount of...traction. You could get about 20 miles with this arrangement then you had to find another fence to run over."¹⁰

Additionally, the Division needed to resupply and refit. In the last two weeks of December the 7th consumed supplies voraciously. The howitzers fired over 53,000 rounds, the medium tanks and tank destroyers pumped out over 13,000 rounds, the infantry fired enormous quantities of small arms ammunition, used nearly 3,000 grenades, and fired over 1,000 rockets. Thus, besides issuing supplies to replace those lost in combat, the service units needed to rebuild authorized

stockages of ammunition, fuel and rations. To meet the need for additional camouflage, the Division found 1,500 mattress covers, 125 snow capes, and 1,500 two-piece camouflage suits. In addition to their own training, the Division Engineers supported the logistics and training effort by reconnoitering 1,600 miles of roads and trails. They also swept mines, repaired roads, and hauled away snow.¹¹

Coming out of the line not only provided the opportunity to replenish, but other opportunities as well. Billets in Belgian towns gave the troops a chance to thaw out and sleep with both eyes shut. More welcome still were trips to shower points, though such occurrences were sufficiently rare to merit comment in the unit after action reports. General Hasbrouck considered this process of mental restoration an important part of preparing his soldiers to return to combat. His reception centers assisted by initiating newcomers to the Division in its values and traditions. Hasbrouck also visited his units to instill enthusiasm for the return to the offensive and to gauge progress as well.

Hasbrouck's subordinates reflected his views. General Clarke addressed the issue head on. On 9 January Clarke visited the 434th AFA, his direct support artillery battalion. At an evening officers' call he commended the battalion on its outstanding work in December. He then "started on the projected operation and exactly what he wanted done to insure success." According to the battalion's

AAR, "The General clearly stated that aggressiveness and offensive action must be instituted in the minds of all. Our object is not gaining of ground but the extermination of the German Army, which must and will be destroyed."¹² LTC James G. Dubuisson, who commanded the 434th, anticipated Clarke's tough language. On 5 January, the second day after they had come out of the line, Dubuisson directed his Battery Commanders to "pass on to the troops the spirit of the offensive..."¹³ Hasbrouck and his subordinates not only worked to get the "Lucky Seventh" re-equipped and trained but also to get its soldiers mentally prepared.

To morale preparation, the Division's units added training in the individual and small unit skills required to achieve success. Training varied from battalion to battalion according to their needs and anticipated mission. The artillery battalions tended to concentrate on individual skills which they hoped they would not need. The 440th AFA, for example, trained all hands in the use of the bazooka and in the detection and clearing of mines.¹⁴ The infantry battalions focused on small unit training with "emphasis on aggressiveness and control."¹⁵ The 23rd AIB worked with its soldiers on the reduction of obstacles and road-blocks.¹⁶ The 48th also tried its hand at the use of demolitions and noted in its journal that "the spirit and enthusiasm was good and good training resulted."¹⁷

In addition to individual training, the tank battalions had to process, test fire, and zero replacement tanks. This

was no mean feat since the tank battalions had sustained an average loss of nearly forty tanks each. The 40th TB drew, processed and fired thirty-five new tanks in ten days. According to General Clarke, most tank engagements on the Western Front occurred at about the 400 yard range. Speed in acquiring and engaging targets became an obsession in the tank battalions. The Ardennes posed a special challenge because its thick forestation precluded massing of tanks and made target acquisition difficult. Accordingly, the 31st TB drilled its crews on the "hitting of unexpected targets by a single tank."¹⁸ Thus, all of the 7th's units attempted to prepare their soldiers to meet the conditions they could expect to encounter when the Division resumed the offensive.

The Combat Commands assumed the responsibility for unit training. Companies rotated through field exercises designed to train them to operate as combined arms teams. The object of this training was "to infiltrate this fairly powerful striking force through lightly defended areas, over secondary roads to strike the enemy from the rear."¹⁹ Repetition and criticism played vital roles in improving performance. Clarke considered critiques especially important and conducted many of them himself. In his critiques he sought to praise what a unit did well and identify what it did not do or failed to do well.²⁰ COL Rosebaum, in CCA, experimented with movement techniques designed to minimize the detection of his attacking units. Through experimentation, CCA learned that Shermans could get within 200 yards of infantry without

detection, thanks to the deep snow which muffled the sound of the tanks' motors.²¹

Finally, the Division had the responsibility of training leaders. Casualties among junior officers and NCOs decimated the leadership of the 7th's platoons and squads. Hence, training replacements and retraining hospital returnees assumed critical importance. The Division Artillery operated a forward observer school for officers and NCOs down to the tank commander and squad leader level. The maneuver battalions also worked hard to train their leaders. For example, LTC Wemple's 40th TB received five new platoon leaders. Wemple personally devised platoon exercises to train these young officers in the fundamentals of their job. He also ran a battalion officers' school where "current problems and past battle experiences were discussed...as well as plans for movement".²²

LTC Wemple kept the battalion staff hard at it, developing plans which kept pace with the changing tactical picture as the rest of XVIII Corps attacked. Though most of these plans were never executed, Wemple believed that "detailed planning is one effective way of keeping all elements of a Task Force oriented at all times."²³ The reports of the other battalions show that Wemple's emphasis was standard in the 7th AD.

While the 7th worked to restore itself, the XVIII Corps went back on the offensive. On 3 January, 1st and 3rd Armies launched a coordinated attack to cut the German penetration

at Houffalize. Just as Ridgway feared, the attack did not aim far enough east to ensure the entrapment of 5th Panzer Army. The 1st Army plan envisaged no dashing thrusts. The abominable road conditions and caution, both in Montgomery's 21st Army Group and Bradley's 12th Army Group, dictated a methodical advance designed, in Montgomery's words, "to see off" the Germans. To Gavin, in the 82nd, the attack resembled "a huge stable door...being closed."²⁴

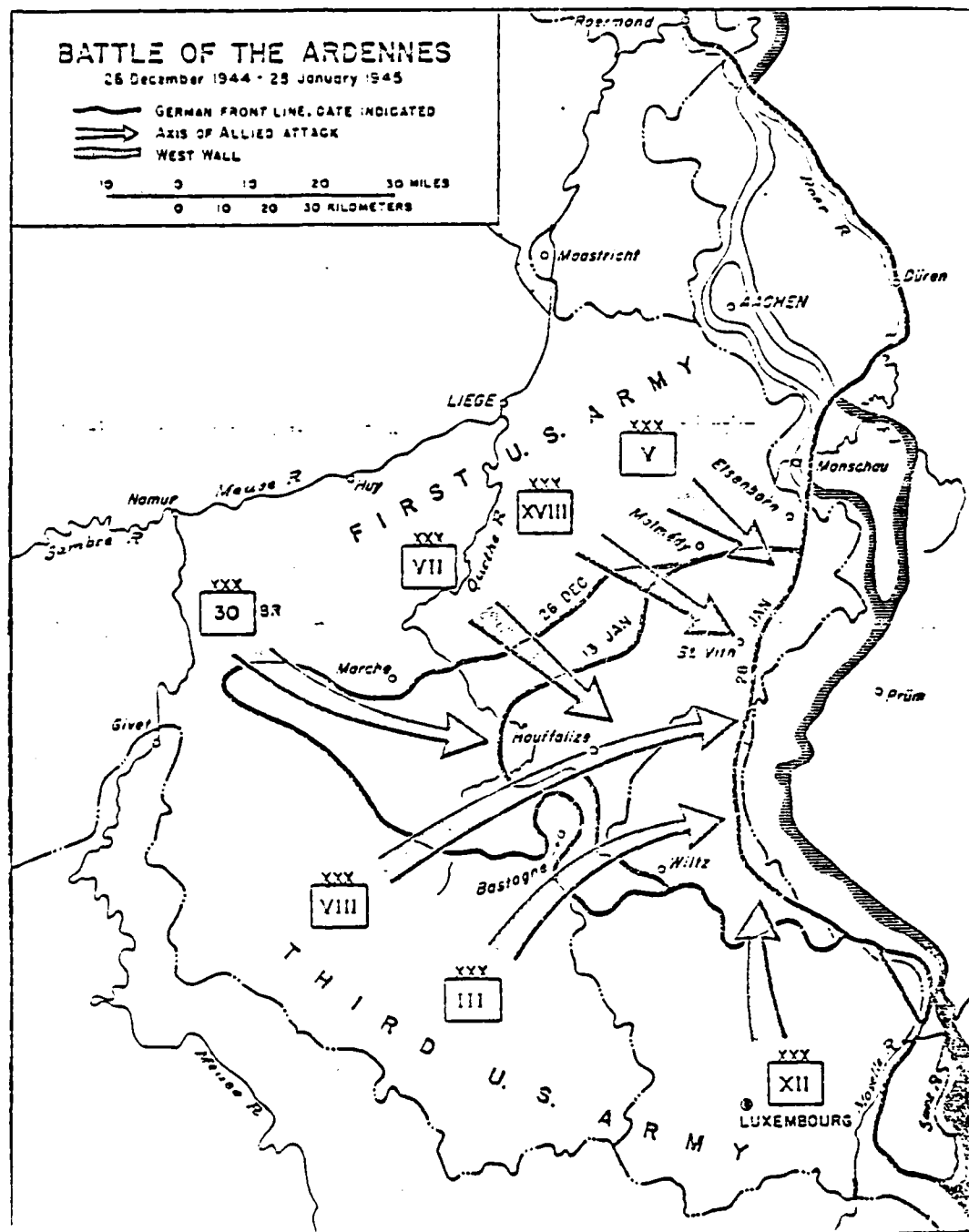
Gavin's metaphor seems especially appropriate in retrospect since the horse did bolt the stable before the door was closed. First Army advanced on a front of three corps: Gerow's V Corps on the left, Ridgway's XVIII Corps in the center, and Collins' VII Corps on the right. South of the German penetration, Patton's army also advanced with three corps abreast.

As a consequence, the German mobile forces were never in great danger of being cut off, nor was 7th AD in danger of being committed to exploit any breakthrough. The two American armies advanced slowly by design and because the conditions remained difficult. Finally, the Germans made excellent use of their remaining resources and delayed the American advance in a series of violent little fights at defiles, road junctions and stream crossings. Nonetheless, 1st and 3rd Armies advanced inexorably until even Hitler recognized the danger. On 8 January he authorized the withdrawal of the mobile forces from the western tip of the salient. Hitler further required Model to extract

the 6th Panzer Army so that it might be refitted for use elsewhere. Hitler's tacit admission of defeat and his desire to remove the 6th Panzer Army condemned the Volksgrenadier Divisions to an unequal fight to save the remaining armor in Manteuffel's 5th Panzer Army.²⁵

The American advance continued through 10 January when the last of the Germans moved east of the Ourthe River. On 12 January 5th Panzer Army retired from the Bastogne-St. Hubert road heading east. On 16 January patrols from Patton's 3rd and Hodges' 1st armies made contact in Houffalize. The following day Hodges' army returned to the control of 12th Army Group. The opportunity of trapping significant numbers of German tanks had passed, but there were still some chances to create smaller pockets. Major General Manton Eddy's XII Corps attacked Manteuffel's salient at its base on 18 January. Manteuffel quickly assembled forces to deal with Eddy and that opportunity faded. Elsewhere, the Germans launched limited attacks which drew off part of 3rd Army, further reducing Patton's chance to nip off even part of the retreating 5th Panzer Army (See Map 10).

The final opportunity rested with Hodges and 1st Army. General Hodges planned a small double envelopment by V and XVIII Corps. This phase of the attack which Ridgway launched on 13 January aimed at St. Vith. In the second phase of the attack V Corps intended to seize the Ondenval defile. At that point Ridgway proposed to pass the 7th AD through the infantry



MAP 10: Reduction of the Bulge
(Reproduced from Forrest
C. Pogue, The Supreme
Command.)

to exploit the penetration and seize St. Vith's vital road center, cutting off at least the German XIII Corps. It would be "poetic justice" as Robert Merriam phrased it.²⁶ The 7th AD would not only help destroy part of the 5th Panzer Army, but would avenge its earlier loss of St. Vith.

Ridgway issued his final instructions for this second phase on 14 January. Ridgway ordered 7th AD to pass "rapidly through 1st Infantry Division in zone of action; attack and destroy the enemy wherever found in St. Vith area; destroy his road traffic; seize St. Vith; and on further Corps order, organize and defend this road center; reconnoiter to south and east of St. Vith and protect Corps left [east] flank."²⁷ To enable Hasbrouck to fight in the thick forests that the 7th had defended, Ridgway augmented the 7th with two battalions of parachute infantry (2/517th and the 509th PIB). To secure the ground taken, Ridgway attached the 508th RCT. Corps also provided bridging assets and two additional artillery battalions including LTC Roy U. Clay's faithful 275th AFA.²⁸

With several feet of snow on the ground and dense forests Hasbrouck expected the going to be difficult. Hasbrouck concluded that the battle would be waged on small frontages without massing of the armor. Therefore, he organized as he had originally proposed in the first week of January and the way the Division had trained. Hasbrouck envisaged the two leading combat commands advancing by bounds each supporting the other in turn.

CCA and CCB would execute the attack and CCR would sustain it by holding captured ground and resting units in rotation. This facilitated attacking on a narrow frontage, provided depth and the ability to continuously support the attack with reasonably fresh units.²⁹

The two forward combat commands fielded six task forces composed of infantry, tanks, tank destroyers, and engineers. The 17th TB and 31st TB formed two task forces. The 23rd AIB and 48th AIB provided the nucleus for two more. The final two were built on parachute infantry battalions. Each task force could move its infantry on either tanks or half-tracks. Thus, Hasbrouck had six mobile units with sufficient infantry to clear towns or fight their way through forests. Each had armor which it could use either to exploit a breakthrough or to overwhelm German infantry. Each also had a platoon of tank destroyers which could fend off German armor. Finally, each could employ its own engineer platoon to clear minefields or reduce obstacles.³⁰

Coupled with the training program, the organization of company teams, task forces and combat commands produced units which, at least in theory, were able to operate with agility, initiative, depth and synchronization. Each subelement had sufficient mobility to act with considerable physical agility. Each was a combined arms organization which not only enhanced agility but aided in the synchronization of the various weapons systems. Finally, the combat elements combined mobility with high levels of combat power at low levels of

command. This feature of the Division's task organization could also enable its units to sustain the momentum of the attack which, in turn, could help the 7th to retain the initiative. If the plan supported and took advantage of the organization, the Lucky Seventh could enjoy the advantages of agility, initiative, depth and synchronization.

The Corps plan offered the chance for the 7th's organization to achieve these advantages. In the first phase of the attack, XVIII Corps seized the La Neuville-Houvegniez-Waimes line. At the end of Phase I, 1st ID (V Corps' right flank unit) seized the ground around Ondenval as far south as Montenau-Ambleve. On the right, the 30th ID from XVIII Corps took Ligneuville. This phase had not achieved great success. The intention had been to encircle XIII German Corps, but the promise of the Corps plan had not been realized. The 75th ID attacking east from Salmchateau had been unable to penetrate into the rear of the XIII Corps which conducted a skillful delay. Instead of exploiting success, the 7th would have to seize ground. Moreover, Ridgway now denied the 7th its revenge. The 30th ID would seize St. Vith while the 7th supported from just north of the town. To get to the line of departure the 7th moved forward from the Werbomont area in two stages. At noon on 11 January the 7th started a move to the Verviers-Spa area. The move took nearly two days and the last elements did not close until late on 12 January. From here the Division moved to attack positions in the vicinity of Waimes on the night of

19-20 January. The next morning the 7th started on the road back to St. Vith.³¹

The road was not without obstacles. First, the 7th would have to negotiate the rugged approaches via the Ondenval defile and through the woods surrounding the towns of Deidenberg, Born and Hunningen. At the end, the Division would fight to retake ground it had defended earlier. The 7th's soldiers knew very well the ground favored the defenders. Waist-deep snow in the fire breaks of the forests would slow them down regardless of cleat extensions and barbwire-wrapped tracks. It was only eight kilometers as the crow flies from Deidenburg to St. Vith, but there were only two roughly parallel roads between them, both of which went through Born. The Auf der Hart and In der Eidt woods also lay across the 7th's path as did the Ambleve River. South of Born the 7th would have to negotiate the Emmels valley where they had bloodied the Fuhrer Escort Brigade. East of St. Vith lay the dense woods of Wallerode Bois just east of the town of Wallerode which itself posed a threat to mobility (See Map 11).

Terrain was only one of many hinderances to the 7th's progress toward St. Vith. The weather, which previously helped the 7th keep the Germans at bay and had saved the Division when the roads froze on the night of 23 December, now became an enemy. Snow followed in the wake of the Russian high which had produced the "miracle freeze" and clear weather of the last week of December. The weather

remained cold and snowy with the result that the roads were icy and snow lay waist deep on the ground. The weather and the terrain would deny the 7th the inherent advantage of armor--speed.

The 7th would also face the 18th VGD, once more, and the 18th's colleagues in the XIII Corps. General der Infanterie Hans Felber's XIII Corps began its life as Korpsgruppe Felber on 1 January 1945. Felber's extemporized unit received the dignity of Corps status on 13 January, the same day that Ridgway renewed his attack. On 13 January Felber commanded the 18th VGD, one regiment of the 246th VGD, the 326th VGD, and the redoubtable but chastened Peiper with a few tanks. Felber had a reasonable amount of corps artillery, perhaps as many as thirty-one tubes and twenty-three anti-tank guns. The infantry divisions were at about 50% strength in their rifle regiments; but, with their organic artillery and the Corps assets, XIII Corps still had the ability to conduct a stiff delaying action.³²

The 18th VGD straddled the 7th's zone of action. The 18th fared well through the capture of St. Vith, having suffered relatively few casualties. After reaching the Salm, the 18th rested from Christmas Day through 28 December. On 1 January the 18th still had about 1,000 riflemen in each of its three regiments. Felber described the 18th's morale as good and believed its grenadiers capable of conducting limited attacks. Since then the 18th had fought a determined delay against the XVIII Corps. On 14 January the Division

was at 50% strength due to attrition and the detachment of one of its regiments. The next day 500 replacements joined the 13th. Still, there were probably no more than 2,000 riflemen in the Division on 20 January when the 7th attacked its old adversary. The 13th attempted to maintain "web-type" defenses which its operations officer described as incapable of defeating a "systematic enemy attack."³³ The 13th mined the obvious armor approaches and built strong points "in the depth of the main defense area..."³⁴ The grenadiers accomplished these preparations as far back as St. Vith by 19 January. Finally, the Volks Grenadiers would be assisted by tanks and assault guns belonging to XIII Corps. Like the rest of XIII Corps, the 13th, though much diminished, still had a lot of fight and prepared as well as it could on ground favoring the defense for the attack it knew would come.

The 7th crossed its line of departure at 0730 on 20 January with revenge on the minds of its soldiers. Hasbrouck's division attacked with two combat commands abreast but with the commands advancing essentially by alternate bounds in order that they might support each other. General Hasbrouck did not expect a stout defense; but, with his units generally road-bound, he did not propose to leave them open to ambush. The Division plan required the Division to advance along a four kilometer front from Ondenval twelve kilometers south to St. Vith. Along the way they would cross the Ambleve and several smaller streams. The highway from Ondenval to St. Vith via Born formed the main avenue of

approach. A secondary avenue of approach went almost due south out of Born towards St. Vith along the Born-St. Vith highway. The villages of Deidenberg, Born and Hunningen would have to be cleared as would the Auf der Hart and In der Eidt woods (See Map 12).

Hasbrouk's battle plan, like his task organization, reinforced and depended on agility, initiative, depth and synchronization. The movement of the combat commands by bounds required coordination, but also enhanced synchronization by enabling the commands to strike objectives from more than one direction. Thus, the firepower of both combat commands could be brought to bear on the Division's objectives. By moving his combat commands in bounds on parallel zones of advance, Hasbrouck retained the freedom to quickly change direction as required to overcome the limitations on maneuver produced either by terrain or enemy action. Finally, CCR retained three battalions which Hasbrouck could use either to maneuver or to weight the effort of one of the two committed combat commands. Hasbrouck's training directive, his task organization, and his plan all encouraged and enabled the Division to act with agility, initiative, depth and synchronization. Execution would demonstrate the utility of the training, organization, and the plan.

CCA began the attack by launching TF Wemple in two columns from the vicinity of Am Kreuz. On the left, TF Britton led by CPT Dudley Britton, B/23rd AIB, moved

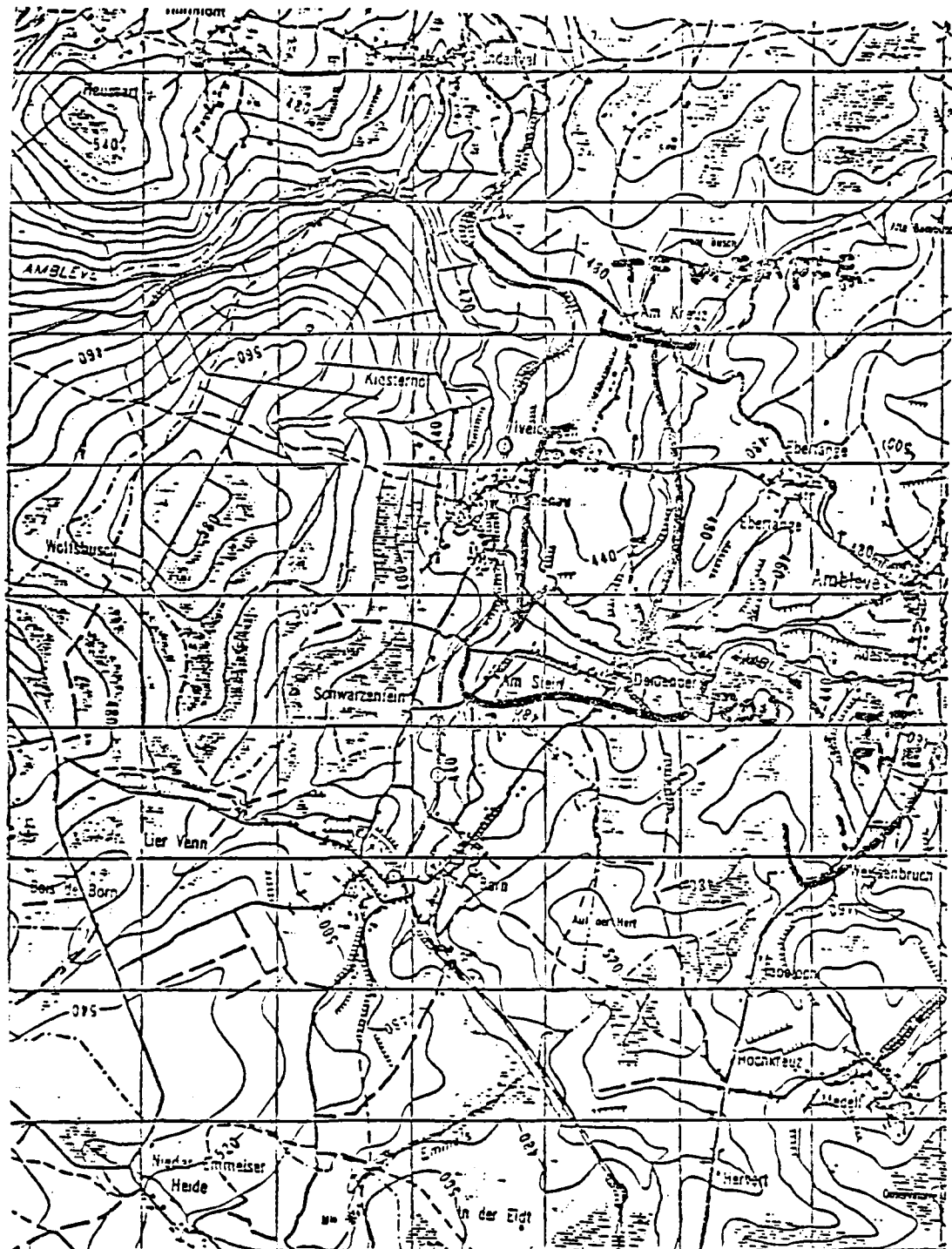
out first with dismounted men leading his tanks. Britton intended to move straight down the ridge leading to Deidenberg, but the snow was so deep that Britton had to keep sliding to the east to find ground on which his tanks could maneuver. On Wemple's right, LT Wilson led a task force composed of two platoons of tanks with a platoon of infantry riding on the tanks. Wilson moved parallel to the highway from Ondenval towards the village of Am Stein due west of Deidenberg. Wilson moved about an hour behind Britton. By 1130 Britton had reached Deidenberg opposed only by small arms fire and desultory anti-tank fire from his left flank. Britton captured four Germans in the town and secured it about noon. Wilson had a much tougher time getting to Am Stein. At noon, however, he was in position to assault the village. Wilson advanced into the town by following an artillery preparation aimed at suppressing anti-tank fire and small arms fire from Am Stein. By keeping the artillery moving, Wilson secured the village at 1600, capturing perhaps thirty prisoners. Britton, too, found more Germans during the afternoon. Nonetheless, by 1730 Wemple's troops secured CCA's first objective and bagged fifty-four German soldiers.³⁵

TF Rhea (23rd AIB) followed Wemple south and passed through Deidenberg at 1230 while Britton was clearing the town and before Wilson had even gotten into Am Stein. Rhea moved east of Deidenberg and advanced up onto the high ground in the vicinity of Weissenbruch against light resistance.

From this ridge, about one kilometer southeast of Deidenberg, Rhea's troops could overwatch the approaches to Deidenberg and interdict movement up the roads leading to Deidenberg and Ambleve from the village of Hochkreuz which rested on a fork in the road from St. Vith.³⁶

At nightfall, TF Seitz (2/517th) moved up behind Wemple at Deidenberg. LTC Seitz, despite continued hostile fire from Born two kilometers southwest of Deidenberg, sent patrols forward to reconnoiter a route for his attack on the Auf der Hart forest planned for the wee hours of 21 January. The evolutions required of CCA were complex, but against light resistance CCA succeeded reasonably quickly. Rosebaum had reason to be content. His combat command succeeded in taking all its initial objectives and had all night to prepare to continue the attack (See Map 13).

General Clarke could not say as much. CCB had numerous problems. Clarke's command advanced on its objective, the town of Born, from two widely-separated directions. TF Thommasik (509th) and TF Chappuis (48th AIB) moved through the 75th ID approaching Born from the west, south of the densely-wooded ridge which formed the western side of the Ondenval defile. TF Erlenbusch (31st TB) followed CCA through Ondenval. At Montenau, Erlenbusch left the highway and climbed the ridge via a logging trail. Once on the ridge, Erlenbusch intended to move along to its southern edge where the maps indicated he could position his tanks to support an attack by dismounted infantry into Born



less than a kilometer to the south east. While Erlenbusch's infantry attacked the northern end of Born, Thommasik, supported by B/31st TB, proposed to attack the town from the west. Chappuis, technically in reserve but prepared to support Thommasik, would follow him.³⁷

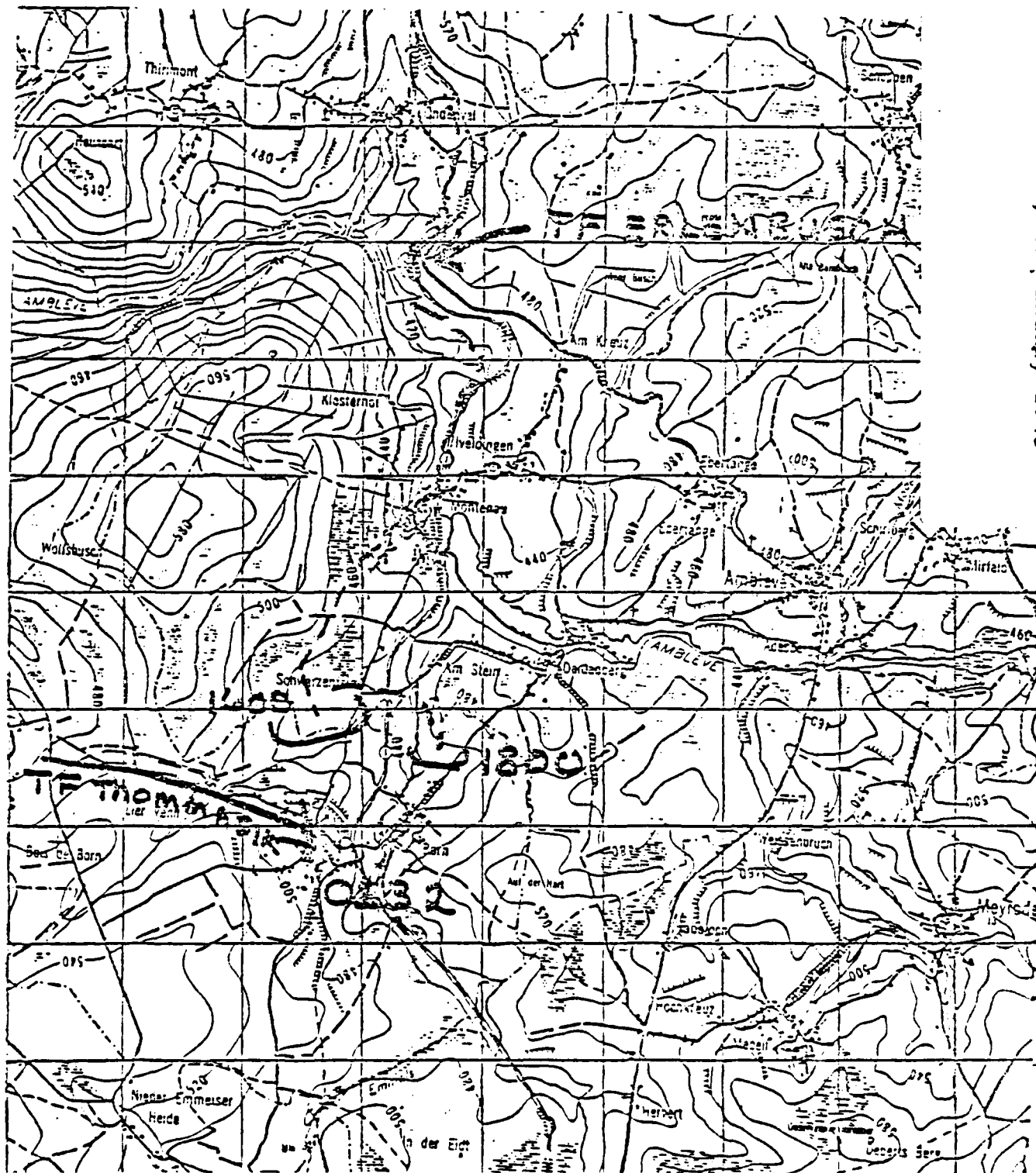
From the outset CCB had its troubles. Erlenbusch found the going difficult even on the highway from Ondenval to Montenu. A dozer tank had to precede the task force to clear snow and there had been a delay while a disabled tank was moved off the road. Once leaving Montenu, the pace became even slower because of the terrain and the obvious presence of Germans marked by the firing in Am Stein to the northeast and from Born. Erlenbusch used C/509th to form an advance guard to provide security for the tanks as they labored along the firebreaks and trails leading south. Company C's three rifle platoons formed a wedge with one platoon advancing just ahead of the tanks and a platoon in the woods on either flank. Erlenbusch himself moved either with the lead rifle platoon or with the platoon of tanks which followed the advance guard. The remainder of the task force trailed to the rear.³⁸

Erlenbusch finally reached his intended position late in the afternoon (approximately 1600). Here he found he could only get two tanks in position. Both of these were destroyed immediately by well-sited German guns. Thus, the best Erlenbusch could do was get his infantry down off the ridge. When the infantry reached the valley floor they

crossed the Ondenval highway and forded a stream east of the highway and reached a position about 500 meters north of Born.³⁹ But, the tired infantry could do no more until Thommasik reached the western edge of Born.

Thommasik had problems, too. TF Thommasik passed through the 75th ID's 120th Infantry Regiment. Because the 120th changed its arrangements, Thommasik missed his 0730 start time. Thommasik also took the precaution of sending a strong patrol forward to make contact with the Germans and determine the nature of the defenses. The patrols did not return until 1130 hours so Thommasik's attack started four hours late. At 1630 Thommasik moved in on Born as Erlenbusch's infantry made their way down off the ridge. Thommasik, like Erlenbusch, ran into well-sited guns and intense small arms fire. At 1800 the German guns stopped him cold (See Map 14).⁴⁰

General Clarke, however, would not accept defeat. Clarke "directed that [the] Task Forces re-organize prepared to continue the attack on order that night."⁴¹ Clarke made preparations with Hasbrouck to launch his combat command at 2345 following a 45-minute preparation delivered by thirteen battalions from Division and Corps artillery. Despite the intense barrage, the Germans remained game, putting up "very heavy resistance which included tanks, SP guns and infantry..."⁴² Still, Thommasik reached the outskirts of Born at 0132 on the morning of 21 December. Getting to Born cost thirteen tanks and numerous casualties



among the paratroopers, and reaching Born did not constitute victory.⁴³

Clarke's thirteen-battalion bombardment and assault with three battalion task forces had not deterred the estimated 200 German defenders. The Germans skillfully employed their remaining troops and guns to prevent Clarke's tanks and infantry from closing with them and still held Born at daybreak. Erlenbush's tanks had to claw their way into the town against intense, accurate fire. LT Henry G. "Tally" Taliaferro, a platoon leader with C/31st, recalled that when he brought his platoon up on hill overlooking the town he discovered "six friendly tanks burning on the slope." Taliaferro, as any prudent soul might, hesitated to descend the slope with his own platoon. But, Clarke was on the scene to ensure that affairs proceeded as he planned. The CCB commander, in his "charming voice," instructed Taliaferro "to secure the rest of this town in twenty minutes."⁴⁴ Preferring to deal with the Germans rather than cope with Clarke, LT Taliaferro followed his General's precise and succinct instructions to the best of his ability. Even so, CCB did not secure Born until 1800 on 21 January after a house to house reduction of the German defenses.⁴⁵

Though the 18th VGD's relative weakness prevented it from fighting along a continuous line of resistance or from conducting an active defense, it fought with skill and determination. Its web-defenses bolstered by anti-tank guns,

tanks and artillery from XIII Corps prevented the 7th from achieving a rapid penetration because its strong points were mutually supporting, arrayed in depth and protected by both natural and artificial obstacles. By the time the 7th captured Born, the 18th had completed obstacles and emplaced minefields as far south as St. Vith.⁴⁶

Regardless of Clarke's difficulty at Born, the operation through 21 January illustrated the wisdom of Hasbrouck's training directive and his plan of attack. The 7th retained its momentum because its organization and training enabled it to reorient and reorganize rapidly. When Clarke's set-piece attack on Born failed on the afternoon on 20 January, he quickly organized a night attack featuring synchronized use of artillery and three task forces. Because Thommasik and Erlenbusch maintained contact with the Germans and because Erlenbusch had pushed his infantry down off the ridge, Clarke did not require either time to conduct reconnaissance of the objective or a moonlit night as specified in FM 17-100 Armored Command Field Manual: The Armored Division. CCB retained the initiative because of the personal initiative of its leadership and agility gained by training and organization.

While Clarke's troops spent the night and most of 21 December engaged in street fighting, CCA prepared to conduct the next phase of the attack which included seizing the Auf der Hardt woods. TF Seitz jumped off at 0400 along routes he had reconnoitered the night before. By 0900 Seitz

had reached the Auf der Hart woods and secured them against "moderate resistance" from infantry supported by artillery at 1200. LTC Seitz pressed on to the southern edge of the forest and stopped while Rosebaum moved Wemple and Rhea forward where they tied in with TF Seitz. Rhea came in on the east and Wemple on the west. CCA then turned its attention to facilitating the movement of the 508th RCT into the Deidenberg sector under the control of CCR.⁴⁷

Despite meeting only moderate resistance, the 7th did not press its advantage by continuing south. Hasbrouck failed to do this for several reasons. First, though St. Vith was on his mind, he had no authority to take it by coup de main. The revised Corps plan envisaged the 7th advancing as far south as Hunningen-Kinnelsberg along the road which connected the Born-St. Vith and Ondenval-St. Vith highways. From here, Corps desired the 7th to support the advance of the 30th ID from the northwest. The 30th would advance across the 7th's right front and seize St. Vith. Doctrinally this made sense. FM 17-100 required armored units to "avoid towns if practicable."⁴⁸ Though he was no tanker, Ridgway believed infantry were better suited in operations against towns. Hasbrouck also remained concerned with the battle for Born which Clarke did not conclude until late in the afternoon. Finally, like the defense of St. Vith, the battle to recapture it was non-linear. Germans retained Medell in CCA's left rear and Wallerode. In fact, the 18th VGD operated its command post in Wallerode

at least until the evening of 21 January. For all of these reasons, XVIII Corps and the 7th AD gave the Germans a breather on 21 January.

General Felber's Corps and the 18th VGD made good use of the time they were given. The 18th occupied a salient extending northward from St. Vith. On the 18th's left the 30th ID and the 75th ID had pushed the 326th VGD back to Hinderhausen. To buy time, Felber mounted a counterattack with the elements of the 18th and 246th VGDs supported by Peiper with a few tanks through the Emmels valley. Though the attack petered out after some limited gains, it forced the 30th ID to a halt. During the night, unhindered by the 7th AD, Felber reinforced the 18th VGD with elements of the 246th VGD. The 18th drew back toward St. Vith and prepared for the inevitable continuation of the American attack. Both Felber and the operations officer of the 18th believed they had averted a potential disaster thanks to the time they were allowed on 21 January and to continuing US caution. Moll asserted that the Americans were obsessed with security and observed "entire companies sometimes being stopped by the fire of a few automatic rifles."⁴⁹

While the 18th licked its wounds, the 7th resupplied CCB at Born and CCA prepared to continue its attack south in accordance with the Corps and Division plans. Rosebaum issued his order at 0200 22 January 1945. His plan required Wemple and Seitz to seize Hunningen in concert with a task force composed of a tank company and infantry company with

engineer and tank destroyer support under the command of Erlenbusch's executive officer, MAJ William Beaty. Rhea would advance south to secure the In der Eidt woods. Rosebaum set 1000 as the time when his units would cross the line of departure. In addition to supplying TF Beaty, CCB proposed to move south as soon as CCA secured Hunningen.⁵⁰

At 1000 22 January Seitz and Wemple moved out and immediately began to take small arms, artillery and anti-tank fire. Wemple lost one tank almost as soon as his task force started out. Rhea, who had passed through Deidenberg the night before, headed straight south from the Auf der Hart woods while Seitz and Wemple moved southeast. To the extent that it was possible the infantry traveled on tanks. In the meantime, Beaty departed Born leading his task force from Erlenbusch's command tank. As far south as Neider Emmels, which the 30th ID had secured earlier, Beaty traveled in comparative safety. From Neider Emmels on he planned to advance in coordination with CCA and on Rosebaum's order. CCA's attack went without a hitch until about 1200 when Rhea reached the In der Eidt woods. Here, however, CCA encountered difficulty clearing the woods. Hasbrouck chafed at the delay since reports indicated that the Germans were withdrawing.⁵¹ Terrain and weather, not Germans, had slowed CCA.

Finally, at 1435, Hasbrouck ordered Clarke to have Beaty continue the attack without waiting for CCA. Beaty

ran into stiff resistance from the start. His own tank took a shot which went right through the tank without injuring anyone but which pierced the fuel cell. Beaty dismounted and found a radio to continue controlling the attack while Erlenbusch's crew drove back towards Neider Emmels with fuel sloshing around the driver's feet. Erlenbusch, listening on Beaty's command net, immediately dispatched Beaty's own tank (which had just been repaired) and the battalion assault gun platoon of three 105mm howitzers mounted on Shermans.⁵²

The assault guns proved helpful since the Germans had turned nearly every house on the route into a strong point. When Beaty took fire from a house, he maneuvered one of his assault guns into position to unload canister against the masonry-walled houses with very satisfying results. The tankers, who had never used canister before, learned with pleasure that it would literally bring the house down. The 18th VGD fired its artillery on TF Beaty with effect as well. Felber helped by committing part of his few remaining tanks to the effort to stop Beaty. Still, TF Beaty got into Hunningen at 1700 and had nearly cleared it when Seitz and Wemple arrived at 1745. When the firing stopped, Beaty made his way to the tavern where he had left his rubber galoshes when he had been evacuated with pneumonia from the same town on 21 December. The innkeeper had kept the galoshes and so they were reunited with their owner. Beaty got Hunningen and his galoshes at a heavy cost in infantry and tanks, but his tankers had destroyed four German tanks and as the

31st TB journal exulted, "the doom of St. Vith was now sealed..."⁵³

During the early evening, while Beaty, Seitz and Wemple consolidated their hold on Hunningen, XVIII Corps ordered Hasbrouck to take St. Vith. Though CCA controlled the troops who held Hunningen and the approaches to St. Vith, Hasbrouck gave the mission to Clarke. CCA would turn its attention eastward. Thus, Clarke and many of the troops who had defended the town would get their chance to retake the town which the Air Corps had reduced to rubble on 27 December. Clarke sent B/38th AIB on a reconnaissance in force. If the Germans had pulled out, Clarke intended to snatch the town the night of 22-23 January and drive on. If not, he wanted to know what they were doing. The infantry got to the outskirts of town where they ran into a stoutly defended roadblock. It appeared the Germans would fight.⁵⁴

Hasbrouck gave Clarke three task forces to use in the attack on St. Vith. Chappuis' 48th AIB with two of its rifle companies and A and B of the 31st TB formed TF Chappuis. MAJ Beaty retained his task force composed of B/48th AIB, C/31st TB, a platoon of C/814th TD, and a platoon of A/33rd Armored Engineers. Finally, Clarke received attachment of TF Rhea, including the 23rd AIB less B company, C/17th TB, a platoon of light tanks from the 17th TB, and a platoon each of engineers and tank destroyers. Hasbrouck left the details to Clarke who developed a fairly

straight-forward plan. Chappuis would move cross country west of the Hunningen-St. Vith road and parallel to it. Beaty would move straight down the road and Rhea would move forward from the In der Eidt forest to the ridge overlooking St. Vith. Here he was to use his armor to support the attack by fire while his infantry attacked dismounted across the remaining kilometer of ground. While Clarke finalized his plans, CCA with the remaining task forces spent the night reorienting towards the southeast for an eventual attack on Wallerode (See Map 15).⁵⁵

CCB, which lost much of 23 January organizing and maneuvering its forces into position, finally attacked at 1415. In some ways the attack on St. Vith was anti-climactic. The change in the Corps plan, the intense cold and deep snow delayed the attack far more than the 18th VGD. The volks grenadiers had evacuated St. Vith the night before leaving only roadblocks and combat patrols in town to delay the 7th. The remnants of the 18th VGD and Felber's Corps hoped to erect stouter defenses east of St. Vith while other units occupied the West Wall in the Schnee Eifel. Still, Hasbrouck, watching from a Piper Cub as Chappuis swept around to the south of the town while Beaty drove straight in and Rhea looped around from the northeast, described the attack as "pretty to watch." CCB overwhelmed the remaining German troops and forced them from St. Vith by 1745.⁵⁶ With the exception of strong patrol activity, the 7th once again had St. Vith to itself.



MAP 15: CCB 23 January 1945

Anti-climactic or not, the capture of St. Vith did not mean the 7th was finished. The same night the 7th took St. Vith, Hasbrouck issued orders for CCA to take Wallerode and CCB to push south and east toward the Schnee Eifel. During the next several days the 7th pushed toward the West Wall and effected a link-up with 3rd Army units advancing northeast from the Houffalize corridor. The 7th's Engineers also built a bypass around the demolished town of St. Vith to facilitate the opening of the roads which led from the town.⁵⁷

The task of effecting link-up fell to LTC Robert Erlenbusch. Erlenbusch's task force occupied an arc of ground which extended south and west of St. Vith along the very road his tankers had used to withdraw from St. Vith on 22 December. On 27 January Erlenbusch set out from St. Vith in a Stuart tank borrowed from his D Company:

I proceeded west on the Neundorf road to try to contact the unit that was to the west [87th ID]. The light tank was a good vehicle for this job. At idle speed the two cadillac engines made practically no noise. The foot and a half or snow pretty well deadened the noise of the tracks. It was a cold, crisp, clear night and the star-light reflecting off the snow gave us enough light to see where we were going. About halfway down the road to Neundorf we idled up to a still standing farmhouse. This would be a likely place for an outpost so we stopped our movement even though we could see no one or any sign of occupancy. As we stood there frozen into the scene we heard the distinctive click of a rifle bolt being pulled into position and simultaneously a challenge in English. We had made contact with a battalion out post. In due course, the Battalion Commander arrived and I explained to him where our units were and that we expected friendly units to be coming from the south probably along the Grufflengen-St. Vith road. He explained to me what he knew of

his unit's positions and I was off in my tank; hopefully to get by C Company on my way home without being shot. After a number of attempts I finally got them on the radio and explained where I was and where I was going. Finally arrived at my CP about 2100 and was treated to a hot toasted cheese sandwich someone made for me on the top of an old wood burning kitchen range salvaged from the rubble and brought to our basement CP.⁵⁸

The Battle of the Bulge was well and truly over. The 82nd Airborne began relieving the 7th the next day. The 82nd completed the relief on 29 January and, with the rest of XVIII Corps, launched an attack to reduce the West Wall a second time. The 7th went to Eupen, Belgium, for a short rest before going on to help destroy Model's Army Group B in the Ruhr Pocket. That, too, had a touch of poetic justice since it was Army Group B which had conducted the Ardennes campaign. The cost for the ironic achievement of recapturing St. Vith had been high. The Division suffered 1,466 casualties in the January fighting, but they captured 1,013 Germans and, more importantly, helped destroy a significant part of the last German reserves in the West.⁵⁹

The successful rebuilding and fighting of the 7th in January is a tribute to its leadership, its soldiers, and to the bounty of the American Army in World War II. Hasbrouck issued guidance which aimed at producing, in the minimum time, a division which could act with agility, initiative and synchronize its efforts across the depth of the battlefield. His Combat Command and Battalion commanders turned to the task with a will aided by the service units and the willingness of the troops. That included surprised and

sometimes bitter ex-college students and anti-aircraft troops who found themselves in tank crews and infantry squads in the middle of what can be accurately, if melodramatically, described as a desperate battle. Even so, the 7th did not succeed entirely. Knowlton's cavalry troop went into battle on 24 January without armored cars, without adequate winter clothing, and with only a clip of ammunition per M-1. B Troop was the incarnation of critical shortages of all kinds. Still, B Troop like the rest of the 7th made do with what it had and did pretty well with that.⁶⁰

Hasbrouck organized and conducted operations in January in a manner which made use of the operational concepts of agility, initiative, depth and synchronization. Nonetheless, the Division's operations occasionally seemed wanting in the use of one or more of these concepts. At times the 7th moved slowly, both mentally and physically. CCB's preparations for attacking St. Vith went slowly partly because the snow and the cold drained the troops of energy and the night made them fearful. With the exception of Clarke's attack on the night of 20 January and his reconnaissance of St. Vith on the night of 22 January, the 7th tended to leave the night to the Germans. For their part, though they too were cold and slowed by the snow, the Germans made good use of the dark.

The 7th's reluctance to attack at night stems from several sources. First, the doctrine on the use of armor at night embodied in the 1944 edition of FM 100-17 and in FM 100-5 was full of warnings about all of the things that

can go wrong and contains little that would encourage such operations. FM 100-17 suggested that night attacks could be attempted on moonlit nights, but only to support projected daylight operations. The manual intoned that night attacks should be short. If long advances were contemplated the manual specified that "the objective should be one that is vital to the attacker for daylight operations."⁶¹ The fact that the manual does not contain a single word about the advantages of attacking at night compels the conclusion that the authors could think of none. Not surprisingly, when Ridgway urged Hasbrouck to start his first attack at night, General Hasbrouck demurred, noting "it is difficult to operate in the tanks at night."⁶² This from the same officer who, during the defense of St. Vith, did not blanch in the face of attacks from as many five divisions.

Clearly the Germans took a different view about fighting at night. Manteuffel's chief of staff argued that night fighting took less skill than fighting in daylight. This view is alien to Americans and diametrically opposed to the doctrine espoused during the War. Night fighting, except as a means of inserting paratroops, was avoided. The 104th ID led by Major General Terry Allen trained and fought at night. This was sufficiently unusual to make the 104th almost legendary in the arcane art of fighting at night. The 1944 edition of FM 100-5 noted that the "night attack has assumed major importance as employed by troops especially trained to overcome the difficulties of the operation and

exploit its advantages."⁶³ The basic Army operations doctrine suggested that night attacks could be undertaken only by specially-trained units. This attitude may reflect feelings peculiar to Americans. In any case, the US Army has avoided fighting at night whenever and wherever possible. In Korea, US units "hunkered down" at night and in Vietnam units routinely stopped in the afternoon in order to have several daylight hours to prepare for the dreaded setting of the sun, because the night belonged to "Charlie."

The weather also affected night operations. General William A. Knowlton recalls "that when the temperature dropped, all anyone wanted to do was to get in out of the cold and try to sleep near a fire if possible....After a peep patrol, we had to be lifted out of the vehicles; we were that cold. So the night was used for sleep and for preparing for the next day."⁶⁴ German accounts, too, describe the cold and the suffering of their troops in graphic detail. Cold, then, tended to reduce night activity.

For whatever reason or combination of reasons, the 7th left the night to the Germans which resulted in decreased agility and some sacrifice of initiative. Agility and initiative were also adversely effected by the 7th's tendency to go to ground when fired on and advance only after calling in prodigious amounts of artillery. On 25 January a 7th AD tank unit halted under the fire of a single anti-tank gun and moved again only after bombarding the gun.⁶⁵ Again,

there are several reasons for this phenomenon which was by no means peculiar to the 7th. Part of the answer lies in the condition of the 7th. No tank crew who had survived the December fighting would ever cavalierly advance under anti-tank fire. The 7th lost 121 tanks in December. No tank crew, however brave and dedicated, would forget that.

Moreover, the tankers knew they could not defeat German armor in a head-to-head fight. Sherman and Stuart crews much preferred to "bushwhack" German tanks than to fight them head on. LTC Erlenbusch recalled a situation in Holland where a Stuart "got the drop" on a German medium and fired something like thirty hits before the German crew surrendered, not because their tank had been penetrated but because the din had worn them out. The Shermans were better, but they too could effect penetration only at certain weak spots though they might achieve a kill by banging rounds on German tanks often enough and fast enough to kill or wound the crew with spall. General Clarke favored the use of White Phosphorous against German tanks because it started external fires which blinded the crew and sometimes the fires spread.⁶⁶

The 7th was tentative for other reasons, too. In the happy days of August and September, the 7th chased Germans all over France. Knowlton remembers when someone would say:

'There is a company [of Germans] over in that woods' a few soldiers would yell 'Lets go get them' and take off across the field. In the Bulge, with the mystery of what was happening, when someone would say 'There is a sniper in that woods' everyone would hunker down in nervousness. It makes a great deal of difference if the troops think they are winning in a breeze.⁶⁷

Add to Knowlton's theory many new soldiers and many new lieutenants and one has the elements which produce a lack of agility and initiative. The 7th lost some of its edge along the Salm in December and, despite Herculean efforts, had not recovered all of it in January. Combat power is not merely a function of a training program and new equipment. It includes confidence built on experience and success.

There is still another reason the 7th, like many American units, tended to halt when hit and advance only after achieving overwhelming fire superiority over its opponents. Russell Weigley argues convincingly that resorting to firepower first and maneuver second is an American tradition dating from the Civil War. Though Weigley's argument is perhaps carried to excess, the US Army has long enjoyed the advantages of having a firepower advantage over their enemies and has used it often. In World War II, the Army had an abundance of artillery, air planes and automatic weapons which it used to great advantage against the Germans, Italians and Japanese. Consider how Bradley began the COBRA operation or the fact that Middleton, whose Corps had an economy of force mission, fielded no less than nine battalions of corps artillery on 16 December. It is not surprising that the 7th used its considerable firepower whenever it could. Sadly, the 7th's enthusiastic use of artillery and massed fires sometimes sidetracked it from seizing the chance to maneuver units instead of fire.

Though it is true that the 7th could have operated with greater agility and initiative in January, this should not detract from its considerable accomplishments. Within the limits of the doctrine and its partial renaissance, the 7th continued to demonstrate its understanding of agility and initiative with the skill which contemporary American units would do well to emulate. The 7th executed the complex evolutions specified in Hasbrouck's plan with agility and initiative. CCB's quick organization of the night attack on Born demonstrates this more than adequately. The 7th could act with agility and initiative because it was blessed with officers such as Bruce Clarke, Robert Erlenbusch and "Tally" Taliafero. Clarke stayed close to the action so he could deliver himself of inspirational guidance to young officers like Taliafero. For his part, Taliafero had the courage to respond despite the nearness of six burning, "friendly tanks." Erlenbusch had the presence of mind to monitor Beaty's frequency on 22 January even though he was not in the fight. Thus, LTC Erlenbusch could act with speed in dispatching help to his beleaguered executive officer without being asked. Despite the weather, the Germans, the doctrine and, sometimes, its own inclinations, the Lucky Seventh operated in accordance with the operational concepts of agility and initiative.

Clearly, Clarke's use of thirteen artillery battalions suggests he not only knew how to synchronize fires with maneuver, but that Hasbrouck knew that he could. This

ability, enhanced by organization and training, extended down the chain as well. But, synchronization is more than massing fires. It is the sequential and/or simultaneous combination of weapons systems and units which produces results on the enemy which exceed the sum of those systems and units. The 7th AD could synchronize. On 20 January, TF Wemple combined the efforts of tanks and infantry to seize Deidenberg and Am Stein. Wemple's attack featured a two-pronged assault on the defenses using a tank heavy team on one approach and an infantry heavy team on the other. Each prong supported the other and Wemple used artillery and mortar fires to support the attack and suppress German fires coming from Born. Even as Wemple's troops cleared the two villages, TF Rhea moved through Deidenberg to reduce German positions on Wemple's left flank. LTC Rhea's efforts during the final attack on St. Vith reveal the same quality. Rhea positioned his tanks overlooking St. Vith where they could support both the maneuver of TF Beaty and his own dismounted infantry which looped south and east to attack St. Vith from the northeast. These cases illustrate the elements of synchronization.

Depth, or the ability to operate across the spectrums of time and distance, is a difficult concept to articulate clearly. It is even more difficult in practice. The operational concept of depth implies the ability to operate in a non-linear battlefield in which conditions and the locations of friendly and enemy units are dynamic. The 7th operated

well in these conditions. Though Hasbrouck was unwilling to cut himself loose from a reasonably secure base of operations (that is, he attempted to secure his rear) he was never overly concerned with his flanks nor did he hesitate to bypass opposition if required. Apparently, his subordinates were comfortable with, or at least tolerant of, this view. Thus, while CCB reduced Born, CCA continued to move south, leaving not only Born behind but operating with Germans in Medell to their left rear. When units were slowed, such as when CCA experienced trouble clearing the In der Eidt forest, Hasbrouck sent Beaty on to Hunningen without waiting to tidy up the advance.

There is more to depth, however, than a willingness to accept a non-linear battlefield. Depth includes striking the enemy throughout the depth of his position and anticipating his moves. The 7th did reasonably well in this respect, too. Hasbrouck's artillery was his chief tool for influencing the battle beyond the range of his most advanced units. General Hasbrouck used artillery to interdict German lines of communication and likely or known routes of withdrawal or reinforcement. Beyond that Corps artillery fired deep in the German rear and caused the German XIII Corps sufficient difficulty to warrant comment by its commander.

Hasbrouck's understanding of the utility of thinking deep is evident in his attack plan. The Division plan of attack envisaged several days of battle, including the approach to the zone of action from a distant assembly area.

It is difficult, however, to determine how much beyond St. Vith General Hasbrouck's vision extended. Certainly his G-3, COL Charles Leydecker, believed Hasbrouck's vision was extensive. Leydecker asserts that General Hasbrouck was a "master of mobile warfare."⁶⁸ Whether or not Leydecker's assessment is correct, Hasbrouck clearly understood the operational concept of depth.

Two issues remain. First, the nature of fighting with mechanized forces; and, secondly, the question of how to measure combat power or effectiveness of units. As in the defensive fight in December, friction dominated the fighting in January. The 7th operated with less than textbook perfection because friction acted on everything it attempted. Erlenbusch spent hours struggling through waist-deep snow to reach a position from which he could overlook Born, but on arrival only two tanks could find suitable positions and the Germans promptly knocked these out. As a result, TF Thommasik had to go it alone, confined to the road leading east into Born which cost B/31st TB thirteen Shermans. Snow and cold produced friction and casualties. Frostbite, not Germans, caused nearly half of the 7th's casualties. Lastly, the rate at which a dismounted infantryman could break a trail through the snow often determined the 7th's rate of advance.

Change and the enemy also produced friction. On 14 January the 7th believed it would be responsible for seizing St. Vith. This changed before the 7th crossed its line of departure on 20 January. Change helped delay

Clarke's attack on that town. Ridgway decided on 22 January that the 7th would, after all, take St. Vith. The change reached Clarke on the evening of 22 January. Hours sped away while Clarke developed his plan and moved units into position. Finally, Germans fought the 7th with skill and determination. On 23 January the 18th's infantry strength had declined to approximately one battalion's worth of troops. No longer capable of lashing back they used artillery and anti-tank guns to delay the 7th for a day at St. Vith.

Measuring combat power or effectiveness is far more difficult than asserting the presence of friction. The ingredients include leadership, morale, and material resources. Clearly the 7th had effective leadership. Though the 7th's morale sagged at the end of December, rest and training had, to a large degree restored it; but, morale is a function of more than training and rest. Experience and, as General Knowlton has suggested, the conditions which prevail also play a role. On balance, the 7th remained an experienced unit in January, but it had many new soldiers who still had much to learn. Though it was apparent the battle against the Germans in the Bulge was being won, it was not being won "in a breeze." The "mystery" of the Bulge had not worn off. For all of these reasons the 7th had not reached 100% in the morale column. The 7th had accomplished wonders in restoring its material resources thanks to the efforts of its own service units and those of

1st Army. Still, it lacked winter clothing and its cavalry units, at least, did not have all of their equipment. The 7th, by the standards of the day, attacked on 20 January at less than 100% effectiveness. It is pointless to hazard a guess which might convey false precision, but the 7th AD had not yet returned to the level of effectiveness with which it had begun the Battle of the Bulge.

The 7th Armored Division's performance in January 1945 is not significant for the recapture of St. Vith, the capture of 1,013 Germans, or the destruction of a part of the diminishing stock of Germany armor. These achievements merited no special recognition then, nor do they now. Other units captured important towns or destroyed entire German formations. The 2nd AD, for example, destroyed the 2nd Panzer Division, and the 30th ID laid waste to Peiper's Kampfgruppe. What is significant about the 7th is that it not only survived the beating it took in December 1944, but in two weeks revived itself sufficiently to operate with competence and even some brilliance in January 1945.

ENDNOTES: Chapter 4

- ¹Cole, The Ardennes, pp. 557-577.
- ²Ridgway Papers, Commanders Conference at XVIII Corps, 1345, 31 December 1944.
- ³Ibid.
- ⁴See, 87th RCN AAR January 1945. Re: Ladd see, Ellis and Cunningham, Clarke of St. Vith, p. 121.
- ⁵7th AD AAR January 1945, p. 22.
- ⁶Ibid.
- ⁷Hasbrouck interview 20 August 1984.
- ⁸Letter, General William A. Knowlton to Major Gregory Fontenot dated 15 November 1984. See also, Hasbrouck interview 20 August 1984.
- ⁹7th AD AAR January 1945, pp. 23-24. See also, Erlenbusch to Fontenot, 25 September 1984.
- ¹⁰Erlenbusch to Fontenot, 25 September 1984.
- ¹¹7th AD AAR December 1944. See also, January AAR, p. 25. The two-piece camouflage suits arrived on 20 January 1945, just in time to be used.
- ¹²Hasbrouck interview 20 August 1984. See also, 434th AFA AAR January 1945, p. 4.
- ¹³434th AFA AAR January 1945, p. 2.
- ¹⁴440th AFA AAR January 1945, p. 1.
- ¹⁵48th AIB AAR January 1945, p. 8.
- ¹⁶23rd AIB AAR January 1945, p. 1.
- ¹⁷48th AIB AAR January 1945, p. 8.
- ¹⁸Clarke to Fontenot, 1 April 1984. 40th TB AAR January 1945, p. 1. See also, 31st TB AAR January 1945, p. 1.
- ¹⁹31st TB AAR January 1945, p. 1.
- ²⁰Clarke interview 19 August 1984.

- ²¹7th AD AAR January 1945, p. 23.
- ²²17th TB AAR January 1945, pp. 1-2.
- ²³Ibid., p. 5.
- ²⁴James M. Gavin, On To Berlin (New York: The Viking Press, 1978), p. 249.
- ²⁵Merriam, Dark December, pp. 205-207.
- ²⁶Ibid., p. 207.
- ²⁷Quoted from XVIII Corps Field Order #2, 11 January, in 7th AD AAR January 1945, p. 24.
- ²⁸Ibid. The 509th was a separate battalion. The 508th was one of the 82nd's regiments.
- ²⁹Ibid., p. 25.
- ³⁰Ibid.
- ³¹Ibid., pp. 25-26. See also, Pallud, Battle of the Bulge: Then and Now, pp. 461-465.
- ³²General der Infanterie Hans Felber, XIII Corps (1-25 Jan 45) EUCOM MS# B-039, pp. 1-9.
- ³³Moll, 18th VGD, p. 62.
- ³⁴Ibid., p. 64.
- ³⁵17th TB AAR January 1945, pp. 6-8.
- ³⁶23rd AIB AAR January 1945, p. 1.
- ³⁷CCB 7th AD AAR January 1945, p. 2.
See also, Erlenbusch interview 8 December 1984, Port Charlotte, Florida.
- ³⁸Ibid.
- ³⁹Ibid.
- ⁴⁰CCB 7th AD AAR January 1945, p. 2.
- ⁴¹Ibid.
- ⁴²Ibid.
- ⁴³Ibid.

- ⁴⁴7th AD Association, The Lucky Seventh, p. 307.
- ⁴⁵CCB 7th AD AAR January 1945, pp. 2-3.
- ⁴⁶Moll, 18th VGD, p. 79.
- ⁴⁷7th AD AAR January 1945, p. 27.
- ⁴⁸FM 17-100, Armored Command Field Manual, 1944, p. 91.
- ⁴⁹Moll, 18th VGD, p. 81. Re: the counterattack see, Felber, XIII Corps, p. 17. See also, Robert L. Hewitt, Work Horse of the Western Front: The Story of the 30th Infantry Division, Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1946, p. 206. According to Hewitt, the counterattack was "beautifully planned." The 120th Infantry Regiment did not detect the Germans until they were "practically in the positions of the 1st and 3rd Battalions."
- ⁵⁰CCA 7th AD AAR January 1945, p. 1.
- ⁵¹CCB 7th AD AAR January 1945, p. 3.
- ⁵²The sequence of events following the hit on Beaty's tank is unclear. Beaty apparently waited for his tank and the assault guns before continuing. See also, Erlenbusch interview 8 December 1984.
- ⁵³31st TB AAR January 1945, and Erlenbusch interview 8 December 1984.
- ⁵⁴CCB 7th AD AAR January 1945, p. 3.
- ⁵⁵Ibid.
- ⁵⁶Ibid.
- ⁵⁷7th AD AAR January 1945, pp. 29-31.
- ⁵⁸Erlenbusch interview 8 December 1984.
- ⁵⁹7th AD AAR January 1945, Appendix I. Tank losses for the month were not recorded, but the Division reported in its February report that it began the month at 80.3% in medium tanks which indicates the loss of approximately thirty-six tanks in January. CCB 7th AD was relieved by elements of the 87th ID.

⁶⁰Knowlton to Fontenot, 13 December 1984.
Roland G. Ruppenthal demonstrates that the severe shortages of winter clothing stemmed from maldistribution, indecisiveness and poor planning on the part of Theater Quartermaster. See, Ruppenthal, Logistics, pp. 2: 218-235.

⁶¹FM 17-100, p. 82.

⁶²Ridgway Papers, Commanders Conference at XVIII Corps, 1605, 14 January 1945.

⁶³FM 100-5 Field Service Regulations: Operations, June 1944, p. 241.

⁶⁴Knowlton to Fontenot, 13 December 1984.

⁶⁵Moll, 18th VGD, p. 81.

⁶⁶Erlenbusch interview 8 December 1984. In March 1944, Erlenbusch prepared a paper for the Commanding General III Corps which studied "the merits of the American vs. the German tank." Erlenbusch found the US tank inferior on a tank vs tank comparison, but noted that US armor won because of "superiority in numbers, the industrial ability to replace casualties, and most important, the ingenuity, the boldness, the fearlessness and just plain 'guts' of the American tanker." Colonel Erlenbusch's comments are instructive for the contemporary American soldier. The American Army faces an opponent with a great many tanks, a large industrial base and tankers of demonstrated courage. Americans would do well to wonder if the technical superiority of its tank would suffice in a confrontation with the Soviets. See also, Clarke interview 19 August 1984.

⁶⁷Knowlton to Fontenot, 13 December 1984.

⁶⁸Letter, Colonel Charles Leydecker to Major Gregory Fontenot dated 8 August 1984.

Chapter 5

AFTER THE BATTLE: The "Lucky Seventh" as a Case Study for the AirLand Battle

"I heard a story...that some wounded German said,
'Hell, this is no green division, this is the 7th Armored'."
Brigadier General Robert W. Hasbrouck

This essay illuminates the nature of battle between large mechanized forces and evaluates contemporary United States Army doctrine by analyzing the 7th Armored Division's operations during the Battle of the Bulge. The findings clearly show the complexity of confrontations between highly-mobile armies and demonstrate the utility of AirLand Battle concepts. Further, these revelations pose additional questions as well as provide unexpected answers.

Deservedly, the Lucky Seventh received high accolades for its performance in the Bulge, including a Presidential Unit Citation for CCB and its attachments. For six days the 7th denied the Germans the use of the road and rail network which emanated from St. Vith. The 7th's stand at St. Vith not only threw the Germans off their time table, but allowed 1st Army to bring in troops to hold the northern shoulder of the penetration. The 7th's troopers held as long as they did, against tremendous odds, for three reasons. First, they occupied good defensive positions in what the Corps Commander of the German LXVI Corps described as "difficult, pathless forest country."¹ Secondly, the 7th AD and its leadership were experienced, aggressive soldiers who took the battle to the Germans at every opportunity.

Finally, the leadership of the units in the pocket adhered to sound operational concepts and capitalized on the personal initiative of their subordinates.

The story of the 7th's withdrawal from the pocket and the difficult fighting of the last week of December are less well known, but no less instructive. The 7th conducted a daylight withdrawal under pressure from an SS panzer Division, two volks grenadier divisions and the Fuhrer Escort Brigade with a second panzer division threatening its rear. After only a few hours rest the 7th returned to the line to help XVIII Corps hold the northern shoulder of the German penetration. On 24 December the 2nd SS Panzer slammed into CCA virtually destroying the 40th TB and nearly unhinging the XVIII Corps' defenses along its boundary with VII Corps. The 7th fought back, but its efforts were feeble and grew less effective each day until finally it needed help to retake Manhay.

Mercifully, relief came on the night of 29 December when General Ridgway ordered the 7th into reserve positions from which they could be employed if required. This gave General Hasbrouck the time to rest, refit and retrain his division. In less than two weeks the 7th was restored to nearly full strength. Just as importantly, it trained hard, within the sound of the guns, to return to the offensive. Ultimately, the 7th attacked on 20 January organized and employed in accordance with Hasbrouck's intentions as outlined in his training directive of 1 January 1945. Though

the 7th's operations in January failed to reach the standard it set at St. Vith, it fought with skill and some brilliance retaking St. Vith on 23 January.

Forty years have passed since the 7th AD fought its battles in the Ardennes, yet their experience continues to provide much valid information on the nature of battle between large mechanized forces at least as viewed from the perspective of battalion through division-level commanders. In the section entitled "The Next Battlefield," the authors of the 1982 edition of FM 100-5 could have been describing the Bulge when they outlined what a future conflict might be like. They began by noting, "In modern battle, the US Army will face an enemy who expects to sustain rapid movement during the offense and who will probably use every weapon at his disposal."² The German Army of 1944 thought in exactly these terms. Model hoped to be on the Meuse in four days and intended to move day and night to get there.

FM 100-5 continues by noting that "linear warfare will most often be a temporary condition at best and that distinctions between rear and forward areas will be blurred."³ No one who served in the Bulge would find this assertion difficult to believe; indeed, they would consider it obvious. COL Adams and the soldiers of the 7th's Trains had to move supplies and fight Germans concurrently. During the defense of St. Vith the 7th routinely had to roust out Germans who had penetrated their defenses. Furthermore, the 7th's defense plan does not suggest that

they expected to fight a linear battle. For example, CCR in Petit Thier and CCA in Poteau maintained contact by patrolling, not by tying in positions. Finally, FM 100-5 points out that the Army "may have to fight outnumbered."⁴ At one point in the battle, Hasbrouck believed the 7th was fighting seven German divisions.

There are other parallels between the Bulge and what the Army expects a future battle against the Soviets to be like. Deception is an important part of Soviet doctrine. The German deception operation prior to the Ardennes Offensive serves not only as a model of how to deceive the enemy but as a warning to Americans who, at least in the Fall of 1944, showed a propensity to believe what they wished to believe and not what they could conclude from the evidence. The Germans proposed to use Skorzeny's 150th Panzer Brigade of captured and simulated American equipment to wreak havoc in the American rear. Skorzeny and a handful of German parachutists did indeed spread terror among the rear area troops during the Bulge. This is not very different from the way the Soviets are expected to use their Spetznaz and airborne troops. The operations of Peiper's Kampfgruppe and the intended operations of the Fuhrer Escort Brigade are not dissimilar in organization or use from what the Army expects from Soviet Operational Maneuver Groups.

One further parallel suggests itself which has not been explored in great detail. The Germans attacked the command and control apparatus of the 106th ID with great success.

They located command posts and attacked them with artillery, jamming and by cutting communications cables. These attacks continued against the 7th AD, but with far less success. Partly this stemmed from the fact that the Germans had little time to locate and target the 7th's command posts. But the 7th also protected itself from these attacks. The 7th did not rely on radio communications especially between Division and Combat Command. At times, such as on the move to St. Vith, the entire Division operated on listening silence. During the fighting, Hasbrouck used liaison officers and personally visited units whenever possible. Finally, Hasbrouck trusted his subordinates to carry out his intent. He was untroubled by the fact that he had "very little communication with Generals Clarke and Hoge."⁵ Clarke and Hoge knew what to do and Hasbrouck saw no need to constantly supervise them. The conditions of infrequent or interrupted communications with which the 7th had to cope will very probably prevail in combat with the Soviets.

Hasbrouck's willingness to operate in such conditions did not mean that communications were not important. Effective communications proved essential at St. Vith and will be as important in future battles. Contact patrols, liaison teams and coordination between units consumed time and valuable resources in the Bulge and will do so again. In spite of its best efforts communications failures hurt the 7th. Inadequate communications with Hasbrouck during the withdrawal contributed to COL Nelson's decision to withdraw

before TF Jones had cleared the road ahead of him. On several occasions, units withdrew on orders to conduct new missions without notifying their neighbors. This sometimes caused a spontaneous movement to the rear by adjacent units. Even if no panic ensued, units which remained in the line had to make adjustments to cover exposed flanks. LTC Richard D. Chappuis, of the 48th AIB, considered the problem sufficiently serious to urge that coordination between units become an "iron-clad rule in future operations."⁶ Forty years later it still sounds like good advice.

Describing the Bulge as a non-linear battlefield characterized by rapid movement of large forces in an environment of limited communications only partly captures the essence of battle between large mechanized forces. It reveals little about the ferocious character of the battle produced by the incredible firepower of both sides. It is not possible to truly recreate what the 45-minute bombardment of Born by thirteen artillery battalions must have been like. The weather also added a dimension of misery that can not be exactly duplicated on paper. Today American soldiers speak glibly of "continuous operations" with little understanding what that will mean. They should ask Bruce Clarke, who rode away from the Salm tied into his jeep so that he would not fall out as he slept, what continuous operations means.

Even adding the dimension of misery fails to truly capture the nature of the 7th's battles in the Ardennes

as well as a single word--confusion. Confusion, ambiguity and uncertainty, more than anything else, characterized the fighting in the Bulge. Clarke remembers "the confusion was so great that I can't describe it."⁷ From his experiences, Clarke concluded that the the chief duty of a General was to "keep the confusion from becoming disorganized."⁸ Clausewitz would not be surprised by either Clarke's recollections or by his prescription. Confusion produced by fear, exhaustion, ineffective communications, bad roads and plain bad luck have always been present in battle. Clarke's "confusion" and Clausewitz's "friction" are one and the same and will continue to characterize battles.

Clarke's admonition to generals leads to a discussion of how the AirLand Battle concepts applied in the 7th's operations in the Ardennes. Clarke's injunction to generals is not that they seek to overcome friction, but to understand that it exists and to prevent it from destroying their operations. Implicit in this view is the idea that friction is neutral, tolerable and perhaps even useful. Hasbrouck demonstrated a high tolerance for friction and seized opportunities that friction presented. Thus, Hasbrouck incorporated LT Whiteman and his lost sheep into his scheme of defense when he learned that Whiteman was in Petit Thier and intended to fight. Whiteman happened to be there because of confusion. Hasbrouck used that confusion to his advantage.

General Hasbrouck's dispositions on 18 December were extemporaneous but conformed to his intent. Hasbrouck proposed to deny St. Vith to the Germans. On 18 December he ordered CCR and CCA to take positions from which they could defend his lengthening northern flank. He also took steps to insure the security of his southern flank. The 7th's units accomplished Hasbrouck's intent without the benefit of a formal plan. Instead they acted as the situation dictated in accordance with Hasbrouck's "precise and well conceived orders."⁹ Clearly, communicating intent is the hallmark of preventing the confusion from becoming disorganized and central to utilizing the operational concepts of the AirLand Battle.

None of the commanders in the 7th would have articulated their operational concepts in the way the Army does today, but their actions and those of their subordinates reflect an understanding of what is meant by agility, initiative, depth and synchronization. The 7th Armored Division showed both physical and mental agility. Commanders reached decisions quickly and communicated those decisions clearly. Hasbrouck, Clarke and Hoge, in particular, demonstrated a ready understanding of events with only sketchy information. Their units were trained and organized to accept rapid communication of orders and the rapid formation of task-organized groups for short-term missions. This ability played a key role in both the December and January operations. On 20 December Hoge attacked the 164th VGR in

the Grufflingen woods with a hastily assembled force composed of Stuart tanks and the staff troops of the 14th TB. This "task force" caught the 164th as it was preparing to attack.

Battlefield mobility is part of this notion of agility. Both the Lucky Seventh and Hoge's CCB accomplished significant feats of mobility just to get to St. Vith. To reach St. Vith the 7th fought congestion, confusion and Germans. Within the St. Vith perimeter the defenders used mobility and maneuver to spoil German attacks either by attacking the German flanks or by speeding reserves to a threatened penetration. The 31st TB kept a single platoon in reserve positions throughout the defense of St. Vith. LTC Erlensbusch used this platoon with great effect against the Fuhrer Escort Brigade on two separate occasions. This physical agility owed much to mental agility developed by practice and sustained by confident leadership.

The Lucky Seventh also understood initiative both in the personal sense and tactical (or technical) sense. The lack of clear chains of command required personal initiative. Clarke unhesitatingly accepted command of the defense of St. Vith because it had to be done. Hasbrouck exceeded his initial orders not to commit more than one combat command because those orders had been rendered superfluous by German actions. Though troubled by the confusion about who was in command, he nevertheless acted as he thought best. Hoge arrived on the scene of his

command's first battle with no clear instructions. Yet, he collaborated effectively with Jones, Clarke and Hasbrouck. When ordered to depart St. Vith at the crisis, he correctly concluded that events had overtaken the orders and remained.

The list of other officers and soldiers who acted decisively in the absence of orders during the St. Vith fighting is a long one. Hughes and Stone at Gouvy, Parker at the crossroads, Boylan before the Salm, Rhea at Manhay, Erlenbusch before Born, and many others illustrate the point that Manteuffel made to his interrogators in 1946. Manteuffel asserted, "He who waits for orders on the battlefield will be too late."¹⁰ All of the units at St. Vith were blessed with soldiers who did not wait for orders.

Though the operational level of the battle is not in the charter of the paper, it is useful to recall that the 7th's employment at St. Vith stemmed from an operational level decision reached by General Eisenhower. His rapid analysis of the situation and his willingness to take action prevented a far greater disaster than the surrender of two regiments. Eisenhower's decision to start two armored divisions into the cauldron on 17 December helped seize the operational initiative from the Germans. In tribute, Manteuffel asserted that one of the reasons the Germans failed to achieve their ends was that the Americans "reacted more quickly than was expected."¹¹

Hasbrouck and his soldiers did not merely react to the Germans. The 7th took the initiative by refusing to

fight from fixed positions and, when possible, refusing to allow the German infantry to close with them. When the Germans chose to envelope, Hasbrouck found a way to lengthen his flanks. He thus preserved the advantage of interior lines and his mobility by not allowing his forces to be encircled. Furthermore, the 7th did not fight from fixed positions. Instead, it conducted, in its own words, an active defense--patrolling, counterattacking and shelling the Germans to prevent them from conducting an orderly concentration and a setpiece attack. In January the 7th retained the initiative by echeloning forces which enabled it to keep the pressure on, though it did not do very well at night. In short, the 7th denied the initiative to the Germans exactly as FM 100-5 exhorts the Army to do today.

Fighting deep and seeing deep were not possible in World War II to the degree that the Army anticipates today. Nonetheless, the commanders of the Lucky Seventh's units appreciated the need to be able to influence the enemy prior to close contact as well as the need to preserve flexibility by having depth to the rear of the line of contact. The 7th achieved depth at St. Vith by continuously extending its flanks and by its positioning of units within the perimeter. Additionally, the 7th did not attempt to maintain a continuous front along the line of contact. In recalling the battle, LTC Erlenbush described with irritation the solid, curved lines historians find convenient in depicting unit locations. The line, according to Erlenbusch, was

neither a smooth curve nor was it continuous. It was jagged, allowing units to fire across the front of their neighbors. Moreover, there were gaps in the line through which counterattacks could be launched. Some of these gaps were covered by direct fire, others by patrols and still others had units located in the gaps to the rear of the line of contact.¹² Thus, even on the line of contact units achieved depth.

The 7th also obtained depth by sallying forward of its line of contact to disrupt German preparations or to learn their intentions. The 7th gathered much intelligence by means of patrols and used large combat patrols to keep the Germans at arm's length from the main defensive positions. In January, General Hasbrouck planned an advance well into the depth of the German positions. He organized to sustain that advance by echeloning his forces. As his two attacking combat commands advanced, CCR could push its troops forward to support either of the advancing commands. CCR also controlled the 508th RCT which acted as the Division's follow on force. Thus, the 7th sought to achieve physical depth both in the offense and the defense.

The 7th could not see or fight very deeply because it did not have the assets to do so. It had only its own patrols and its organic Piper Cub observation air craft to use beyond the line of contact. Once the weather broke, the 7th also received help from the IX Tactical Air Force. Fighter aircraft not only provided close air support, but

attacked targets well forward of the line of contact. There is, however, no evidence to suggest that the fighters flew interdiction missions in accordance with the 7th's designs. This had some tragic consequences. On 24 December, twelve P-47 fighter-bombers located and bombed German armor south of Manhay. It is likely that these vehicles belonged to the 2nd SS Panzer. But there is no evidence to suggest that the 7th received that information in time to use it. The air support log is vague on activity in the target area, and no time is given for the location or for the claimed effects on the target.¹³ Neither is there any evidence that 7th passed any information it may have obtained down to CCA, the unit which most needed to know about German armor near Manhay. Cooperation with the Air Corps was insufficiently advanced to insure the maximum effect of either the Air Corps' efforts or the use of combat information it obtained. Hence, the 7th could see and fight only as deep as its own assets enabled it do so.

The 7th's reach seldom extended beyond the range of its organic artillery -- about eleven kilometers. The artillery fired either on suspected targets or targets acquired by sound or from the Piper Cubs. Even so, the 7th used its artillery with great effect. Time and again the artillery broke up German attacks before they could be launched. During the defense the Germans were not allowed to stage attacks during the daytime without interference from the artillery. If they massed, they drew fire. Even at night, the artillery

fired concentrations where the enemy could be heard gathering for an attack. In the attack of January 1945, the Corps artillery fired preparations through the depth of the German XIII Corps. These attacks on his lines of communications prevented General Felber from moving or concentrating units in his rear areas.¹⁴

The doctrine of the day not only condoned the 7th's lavish use of artillery, but encouraged it. The 1944 edition of FM 100-5 noted that field artillery "gives depth to combat by counterbattery fire, by fire on hostile reserves, [and] by restricting movement in rear areas..."¹⁵

General Courtney H. Hodges, then commanding 1st Army, articulated this doctrine more fully when he asserted that the "artillery constitutes a most formidable striking power continuously available to any commander of combined arms for application wide and deep over the battle area."¹⁶

Hasbrouck used his artillery in exactly this fashion and with great effect. Attacking the German rear to the depth of the artillery's range was an essential part of the formula which enabled the 7th to hold St. Vith as long as it did.

Of the four operational concepts of the AirLand Battle, synchronization is perhaps the most difficult to define and to use in practice. In the introduction to this work it was defined as the application of combat power in a way which produces synergistic effects. That could mean the simultaneous or sequential application of firepower. In both

cases maneuver, or at least the movement of forces, is implied. Effective synchronization stems from unity of effort. Unity of effort is a function of the clear communication of intent, organization and training.

The 7th synchronized its actions effectively for all of these reasons. Clarke's night attack on Born exemplifies sequential synchronization of effort. At Born, Clarke ordered an intense bombardment followed immediately by a coordinated attack by three battalions task organized to include armor, infantry and engineers. Finally, the attack came on two converging axis. Erlenbusch demonstrated effective synchronization of effort and firepower in turning back the Fuhrer Escort Brigade on two separate occasions during th defense of St. Vith. Erlenbusch used both maneuver and movement combined with simultaneous application of direct and indirect fires. On 20 December Erlenbusch ambushed the Brigade by positioning forces after dark. Together with pre-planned artillery fires, triggered when his tanks and tank destroyers began their engagement, Erlenbusch's battalion drove back the Germans with heavy loses. These are exactly the kind of results FM 100-5 intends when it describes synchronization.

The 7th organized and operated to facilitate synchronization. Hasbrouck's training directive for January encouraged synchronization by specifying combined arms training with a particular end in mind. The Division trained to attack enemy defenses with the combined capabilities of

engineers, infantry and tanks. Hasbrouck's plan for the January attack further encouraged synchronization. Each of the forward combat commands could support the other and each contained combined arms task forces which facilitated the synchronization of the effects of each component.

The Division also synchronized effectively because its leaders led from well forward. During the advance to Born on 20 January Erlenbusch moved either on foot or in a tank right behind his dismounted advanced guard. The following morning when LT Taliaferro's platoon arrived on the hill overlooking Born, they met General Clarke who was there to ensure all went as he planned. Synchronization in the 7th stemmed from training, organization and leadership.

Clearly, the 7th understood and applied the operational concepts of agility, initiative, depth and synchronization. Its understanding and ability to apply the concepts are a tribute to its leadership and its training. Still, some may argue that technological developments have invalidated the Lucky Seventh's experiences. Secure communications, high velocity tank gun rounds, and modern "deep battle" assets may appear to make the 7th's methods irrelevant. This is just not true. Better weapons and better tools do not relegate the humans on the battlefield to a secondary role. In the Bulge and on future battlefields, soldiers, not their tools, made and will make the difference. The 7th's troopers beat the Germans, not with superior technology, but by out-thinking and out-fighting them.

The 7th's experiences suggest that the operational concepts of the AirLand Battle are sound and were attainable without the advantages of recent technology. The 7th's ability to live with friction and occasionally use it to advantage also commend the AirLand Battle doctrine which anticipates a battlefield not unlike that on which the 7th waged its war. Further, the example of the 7th's leadership validates the need to train soldiers and officers to be flexible, tolerant of ambiguity and willing to take risks. None of these insights are particularly surprising, rather they tend to confirm what many thinking soldiers already believe. But, history does not teach only what is expected. History teaches its own lessons quite aside from what historians expect to find. This short history of the 7th is no exception to this general rule.

Several unexpected questions and answers emerge from the experiences of the 7th AD in the Ardennes. The first concerns the AirLand Battle. This doctrine, now institutionalized in FM 100-5, has been touted as new and revolutionary. This is a fair claim because the 1982 edition has introduced the operational level of war. But, if that doctrine is examined from the perspective of the 7th's operations -- that is, if the approach of this paper is reversed, it becomes apparent that the AirLand Battle's operational concepts are not new. FM 100-5 is not a radical doctrine, nor is it really more complex than the doctrine practiced by the Army in the past. Instead, the AirLand

Battle is a common-sense approach to fighting that represents a return to the main stream of the Army's doctrinal tradition.

FM 100-5's emphasis on the power of the offensive and on seizing and retaining the initiative are on track with the doctrine of 1944 and with what the 7th attempted. Regarded in this context, AirLand Battle doctrine seems far more in tune with American tradition than the recently discarded Active Defense. The 1982 edition of FM 100-5 asserts that the offensive operations "should destroy or bring under control the forces or areas critical to the enemy's overall defensive organization before the enemy can react."¹⁷ The 1944 edition argues that the purpose of offensive operations is "the destruction of the hostile armed forces."¹⁸ Both manuals note that maneuver and firepower must be combined to achieve the objective of offensive operations. The 1944 manual sounds almost radical when it notes "an objective sometimes may be attained by maneuver alone..."¹⁹ The 7th's fight in the Ardennes not only validates the efficacy of the AirLand Battle, but demonstrates that its operational concepts are not new, but rather previously proven in battle in conditions not unlike those expected on future battlefields.

These findings should not, however, inspire total satisfaction or complacency since neither the doctrine of 1944 nor that of 1982 is without shortcomings. The withdrawal of the 7th across the Salm River succeeded,

but not because of the richness of the doctrine on how to conduct retrograde operations. In fact, the 1982 doctrine on retrograde operations is far less complete and, in some ways, less forthright than the 1944 doctrine. The American Army was and is reluctant to cede ground to the enemy.

That reluctance contributed to the loss of two regiments of the 106th and nearly consigned the 7th to an encirclement which in the mind of its two senior officers would have sacrificed the Division to no good end. Forty years after the war, Hasbrouck and Clarke became animated when discussing the Army's tendency to regard ground taken as sacred. Hasbrouck recalls that to Ridgway "the idea of withdrawal was distasteful."²⁰ Ridgway, according to Hasbrouck, was "quite angry about" Hasbrouck's letter of 22 December in which he recommended the withdrawal of the 7th.²¹ General Ridgway, not General Hasbrouck, represented the mainstream view of the American Army. Fortunately, Ridgway did not wed himself rigidly to the view that withdrawals should never occur. Indeed, in Korea Ridgway planned and conducted the withdrawal of the 8th Army shortly after taking command. The Army must rid itself of the idea that withdrawal or "repositioning forces to the rear" is wrong. There have been times and there will be again when giving up ground is exactly the right course to take.

The basic scheme of the Allied reaction to the German penetration in December 1944 followed American doctrine closely. Conceptually, the Allied commanders hoped to hold

the shoulders of the German penetration while allowing the Germans to spend themselves in their drive to the West. Once the German attack petered out, the Allies would drive in on the German salient from its flanks. This, of course, is exactly how the contemporary American Army proposes to deal with Soviet penetrations. In the end the Allied strategy worked. The shoulders of the penetration were held and the Americans reduced the Bulge by attacking its flanks.

Holding the shoulders is a difficult task as the 7th learned at Manhay. Ridgway ordered the 7th into the line on the morning of 24 December to deny the Liege highway to the Germans. But, on the same day, Montgomery issued orders to 1st Army to shorten its lines. This required the 82nd to pull back which, in turn, required adjustments by the 7th and the 3rd AD on its right. All of this made perfect sense and must have looked easy on the planners maps. But, in the Manhay area this required coordinated movements by elements of four divisions from two different corps. Moreover, these moves had to be effected with almost no notice, at night, and in the face of strong German forces. The destruction of the 40th TB and the rout of CCA resulted. Similarly, future battles will also necessitate complex evolutions requiring coordination across major unit boundaries which will also be difficult. The contemporary American Army must train to cope with these problems since its doctrine will force it to attempt operations at least as difficult as those XVIII Corps ordered on 24 December 1944.

Reducing the penetration proved no less complex. The Allied command missed the opportunity to nip off substantial numbers of German tanks by attacking toward Houffalize at the center of the Bulge rather than further east. Ridgway's XVIII Corps had the last opportunity to achieve envelopment of significant German forces. But, Ridgway's plan went awry. The 75th ID moved too slowly in the initial stages. Furthermore, Felber slowed down the 30th ID as it moved towards St. Vith from the northwest. Thus, the 7th AD, which passed through the Ondenval defile hoping to exploit the successes of its running mates, had to push the enemy back through St. Vith and beyond. The 7th, too, had its problems with the steadily weakening but determined remnants of the 18th VGD. The 18th punished CCB at Born, but finally succumbed to CCB's continuous attacks supported by heavy artillery fire.

The 7th's use of artillery in the Bulge may be gratifying for artillery officers, but it should also raise questions for them as well. The 7th spent artillery rounds with abandon because the American Army had a doctrine of plenty and the force structure to support it. In World War II, only the Soviet Union could match the US Army in numbers of tubes. On 15 December, VIII Corps fielded twenty-seven battalions of corps and division artillery. Three days later fifty-two battalions responded to calls for fire in VIII Corps.²² On the third day of a surprise attack in the Fulda Gap will V Corps be able to

call on fifty-two battalions of artillery? Probably not, but American doctrine on the use of artillery has changed relatively little. Perhaps American artillery officers should examine their doctrine to learn whether it is appropriate in a battle in which the enemy not only fields more tanks and troops than the defenders, but also many more artillery tubes.

Night fighting surfaced as a particular American weakness in the Bulge. The 106th folded partly because it failed to make use of the hours of darkness. General Felber's XIII Corps escaped complete destruction not only because the 7th slowed down at night, but because the other XVIII Corps units did not operate at night. The American Army now widely accepts the notion of continuous operations, but is it really prepared to fight at night? Since World War II, the Army has bought significant night fighting capability, yet it tended to avoid fighting at night in Korea and Vietnam. The Army strives hard to turn the night into day with technological innovation, but has not been successful in overturning the idea that night fighting is more difficult than fighting in the daytime. The idea that the Germans believed night fighting required less skill than fighting in the daylight seems impossible to grasp. Rereading, numerous times, the assertion by Manteuffel's operations officer that this was the case does not make the idea more palatable. But, it is one the Army must consider because the Soviets have attacked at night and will probably do so again.

The 7th's reconstitution in January 1945 suggests not only answers to problems but raises questions as well. Reviewing the efforts of the 7th to raise itself from the shambles it had become in December is a humbling experience. It is not uncommon to hear present-day Army officers complain about the onerous burden of conducting training concurrently with post support and major training efforts such as Tank Gunnery. These complaints aired on ranges in Grafenwohr or training areas in Fort Polk seem particularly trivial when the conditions which prevail at Grafenwohr or Fort Polk are compared with those the 7th faced.

The 7th overcame its difficulties by focusing its efforts. General Hasbrouck determined the desired result of training and developed a directive which clearly articulated his desires. The evidence illustrates that his subordinate commanders understood his intentions and aimed their efforts towards attaining the training goal established by the Division Commander. The insight for serving soldiers is that they must determine what their future mission will require. From this estimate they can develop clear guidance. Having done this, it will be possible not only to communicate requirements clearly, but it will be possible for subordinates to follow that guidance.

The chief question raised by the 7th's reconstitution is simple to state. How is combat effectiveness measured? There is no simple answer and perhaps no satisfactory answer to this simple question. Measuring combat effectiveness or

readiness has always involved both quantitative and qualitative tools. In the years since World War II, readiness evaluation and reporting has increasingly depended on complex formulas which suggest precision. However, even in the contemporary readiness evaluation procedure, the commander is required to make a subjective judgment about the condition of his unit. Indeed, the commander's judgment is critical since he can raise or lower the readiness rating of his unit despite the quantitative condition of his unit.

When General Ridgway visited Hasbrouck on 22 December one of the things he wanted to know was the condition of the units in the pocket. Hasbrouck could have claimed effectiveness as high as 80% based on his gross casualty rate or as low as 60% based on his remaining tank strength. In fact, Hasbrouck and his commanders reported the 7th at 50% effectiveness. Only the men on the scene could judge the relative qualitative readiness of the 7th. Given the events of the last week of December, it is hard to find fault with the judgment of the 7th's leadership.

The 7th's continued decline in effectiveness after the withdrawal is not attributable only to casualties and the loss of equipment. Morale, that most difficult of factors to measure, changed as did the physical condition of the 7th's soldiers and the infrastructure of the Division. Junior leaders and riflemen had borne a large share of the cost of the fighting. The 7th made good most of its losses in January, but it did not reach 100% effectiveness.

Despite the 7th's best efforts to rebuild its infrastructure, it was not possible to restore itself to the condition it had reached in mid-December after nearly a month of rest and training. The 7th did a superb job in training its replacement leaders, but they had insufficient time to attain the experience and seasoning of those soldiers they had replaced.

Few contemporary American units would be ashamed of performing as did the soldiers of the 7th and its attachments during those six difficult weeks in the Bulge. Though the World War II "doughs" spoke a different language than the Army does today, they understood the concepts and achieved the standards today's Army has established for itself. They did so as a consequence of effective training and leadership; and they accomplished these things often in the face of unfavorable odds and conditions. The example of the 7th and its attachments is one contemporary American units would do well to emulate.

In this context, three further lessons remain to be learned from the 7th AD. The 7th fought well not only because it trained hard and was blessed by effective leadership, but also because it had acquired considerable experience by December 1944. The 106th ID, by contrast, had been in the line only days when the Germans struck. Like the 106th, American soldiers in the first battle of the next war will face their first fight with little or no combat experience. Therefore, it is incumbent on the Army to harden its soldiers with tough training. In the

absence of combat experience, the Army's training experience must match, as closely as possible, the conditions which will be likely in combat. Therefore, the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California is absolutely essential; but, so too is the conviction that training anywhere must be demanding.

Commanders must be trained also, but their education is even more critical. They must learn to assess their units capabilities accurately and with the understanding that they can never be entirely objective in that assessment. They must also be educated in their doctrine and in that of their enemy. Commanders must determine the intended outcome of their actions and communicate their intent clearly. This capability is unlikely to emerge from training in the process of writing orders. In its commanders, the Army must also develop the ability to tolerate uncertainty, chaos and confusion. All of these things will characterize the battlefield. The American Army must attain what Clausewitz described as a genius for war. Officers who attain this genius will not only overcome friction, but will be able to turn it to their advantage.

The American Army must also come to grips with the unpleasant reality that the theater commander in Europe today, unlike General Eisenhower, will not have two armor and three airborne divisions available on short notice. Like MAJ Parker's soldiers, the American Army in Europe will have to buy time at many crossroads. The Army must

insure the price they will pay will purchase victory against an offensive which will not represent the last desperate attempt of a beaten Army. The AirLand Battle is the means, technology, the tool; but, it will be well-trained soldiers led by well-educated officers who will get the job done.

ENDNOTES: Chapter 5

¹General der Artillerie Walter Lucht, LXVI Infantry Corps 23-12-1944 -- 2-1-1945, EUCOM MS# B-477, p. 2.

²FM 100-5, p. 1-1.

³Ibid., p. 1-2.

⁴Ibid., p. 1-3.

⁵Hasbrouck interview 3 January 1945.

⁶48th AIB AAR December 1944, Commander's Battle Notes, p. 1.

⁷Clarke interview 20 August 1984.

⁸Clarke to Fontenot, April 1984. This theme is repeated in General Clarke's several publications on leadership and commandership.

⁹Wemple to Fontenot, 4 September 1984.

¹⁰Manteuffel, MS# B-151, p. 128.

¹¹Ibid., p. 119.

¹²Erlenbusch interview 8 December 1984.

¹³See, 7th AD Combat Interviews. The 7th AD Air Support Log is included in the materials collected by Robert E. Merriam for the 7th AD Combat Interviews.

¹⁴Felber, MS# B-039, p. 15.

¹⁵FM 100-5 Operations, 15 June 1944, p. 11.

¹⁶Reeves, "Artillery in the Ardennes," p. 139.

¹⁷FM 100-5, p. 9-1.

¹⁸FM 100-5, 1944, p. 109.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Hasbrouck interview 17 May 1984.

²¹Ibid.

²²Reeves, "Artillery in the Ardennes," pp. 141, 146.

APPENDIX I

Frequently used foreign words and abbreviations

AAA	Anti-aircraft Artillery
AAR	After Action Report
AD	Armored Division
AFA	Armored Field Artillery
AIB	Armored Infantry Battalion
CAV	Cavalry Group
CCA	Combat Command A
CCB	Combat Command B
CCR	Combat Command Reserve
FA	Field Artillery
ID	Infantry Division
PIB	Parachute Infantry Battalion
PIR	Parachute Infantry Regiment
RCN	Reconnaissance Squadron
RCT	Regimental Combat Team
SS	<u>Shutzstaffel</u>
TB	Tank Battalion
TD	Tank Destroyers
TF	Task Force
VGd	<u>Volks Grenadier Division</u>
VGR	<u>Volks Grenadier Regiment</u>
"Das Reich"	Nickname-2nd SS Panzer Division
<u>Kampfgruppe</u>	Battle Group
<u>Hohenstaufen</u>	Nickname-9th SS Panzer Division
"Windhund"	Nickname-116th Panzer Division

APPENDIX II

TABLE OF RANK THROUGH LIEUTENANT COLONEL

<u>U.S. ARMY</u>	<u>GERMAN ARMY</u>	<u>SS</u>
General of the Army	Generalfeldmarschall	Reichsfuhrer
General	General	Oberstgruppenfuhrer
Lieutenant General	General der (Infanterie, etc.)	Obergruppenfuhrer
Major General	Generalleutenant	Gruppenfuhrer
Brigadier General	Generalmajor	Brigadefuhrer
no equivalent	no equivalent	Oberfuhrer
Colonel	Oberst	Standartenfuhrer
Lieutenant Colonel	Oberstleutenant	Obersturmbannfuhrer

APPENDIX III

Notes on the 7th AD Table of Organization:

By today's standard, the 7th AD was a comparatively small division. The Division had an authorized strength of 10,937 officers and men. Combat organizations assigned to the 7th were organized under the 1943 Armored Division Tables of Organization. Accordingly, the 7th fielded only 7 maneuver battalions: 3 tank battalions, 3 armored infantry battalions, and 1 cavalry reconnaissance squadron. The Division artillery included three 105 self-propelled howitzer battalions. Combat support assets organic to the Division included a combat engineer battalion of three lettered companies, but with no organic bridge company. The Division also owned a tactical military police platoon and a signal company. Service support included a division trains headquarters, a maintenance battalion and a medical battalion.

As in all World War II formations, the Division required augmentation. Typically, when a division was committed, it received such attachments from its Corps headquarters. At St. Vith, the 7th had attachments of combat, combat support, and combat service support units. These included the 203rd AAA Bn, 814th TD Bn, and various service support units.

Still, the 7th packed quite a punch including 186 M-4 medium tanks. The M-4s came in three variants. Each tank battalion had 53 M-4s mounting either 75mm or 76mm guns in the headquarters tank sections of the battalion and the three medium tank companies which had three tank platoons of five tanks each. The artillery battalions were authorized three M-4s in their forward observer sections. The balance of the M-4s were armed with 105mm howitzers and served as assault guns. Each of the tank companies had one of these and each battalion had a platoon of three in the headquarters company.

The 7th also sported 77 light tanks in two variants. Sixty-eight of them belonged to the light tank companies found in the tank battalions and the reconnaissance squadron. These 68 M-5 Stuarts mounted a 37mm main gun. The remaining nine served as assault guns in the reconnaissance squadron and were armed with 75mm howitzers.

The three infantry battalions each had an authorized strength of 1,001 officers and men. These battalions used the M-3 half-track as weapons platforms and troop carriers. The infantry battalions had considerable firepower which ranged from 105 howitzers employed as assault guns down to 60mm mortars in the platoons. Each battalion also fielded an anti-tank platoon armed with 57mm anti-tank guns.

To control its formations, the 7th had a division headquarters establishment of 164 officers and men. There were also three combat commands. Two of these, A and B, were fully staffed headquarters of 92 officers and men. The third had only eight officers and men since it was intended to serve as a reserve headquarters for units rotating in and out of the line. In fact, armored divisions typically employed their CCR as a third tactical headquarters and must have created unofficial staffs to operate them.

Notes on Infantry Division Organization:

The standard World War II infantry division was built on three regiments. By 1943, the division had undergone significant revision from the original 1920s triangle organization. The 1943 division had an authorized strength of 14,253 officers and men. Each of the three regiments fielded three infantry battalions for a total of 3,118 officers and men in each regiment.

The regiments, unlike the armored division's combat commands, "owned" their infantry battalions. Each of these battalions fielded three rifle companies, a heavy weapons company, and a headquarters company. The heavy weapons company included a platoon of six 81mm mortars and a platoon of four .30 caliber machine guns. The three 60mm mortars and two .30 caliber machine guns. Each regiment had an organic cannon company of six 105mm towed howitzers and an anti-tank company of twelve 57mm anti-tank guns.

The division provided additional combat support in the form of three 12 tube battalions of 105 howitzers and one battalion of twelve 155 howitzers. Generally, additional combat support elements were attached from corps and army assets. For example, an infantry division normally had a tank destroyer battalion and an anti-aircraft artillery battalion attached. The 106th, for example, had the 820th tank destroyer battalion attached during the Bulge.

Notes on Parachute Infantry:

Parachute infantry regiments at 2,354 officers and men were lighter in combat support than standard infantry regiments. Airborne regiments had no cannon company and fewer anti-tank weapons than the standard infantry regiment. Otherwise, the airborne units paralleled the structure of standard infantry units.

APPENDIX IV

TROOP LIST 7th Armored Division

Headquarters and Headquarters Company
Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Combat Command A
Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Combat Command B
Headquarters, Reserve Command
147th Armored Signal Company
87th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mechanized)
17th Tank Battalion
31st Tank Battalion
40th Tank Battalion
23rd Armored Infantry Battalion
38th Armored Infantry Battalion
48th Armored Infantry Battalion
Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, Division Artillery
434th Armored Field Artillery Battalion
440th Armored Field Artillery Battalion
489th Armored Field Artillery Battalion
33rd Armored Engineer Battalion
Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Division Trains
77th Armored Ordnance Maintenance Battalion
Military Police Platoon
Band

Habitually Attached Units:

203rd Anti-aircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons Battalion
814th Tank Destroyer Battalion (Self-Propelled)
446th Quartermaster Truck Company
3967th Quartermaster Truck Company

Attached or Supporting in December:

From VIII Corps:

14th Cavalry Group including:
 18th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mechanized)
 32nd Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mechanized)
275th Armored Field Artillery Battalion
968th Field Artillery Battalion
168th Engineer Combat Battalion
440th Anti-aircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons Battalion

From 106th Infantry Division:

Headquarters and Headquarters Company
81st Engineer Combat Battalion
820th Tank Destroyer Battalion (Towed)

3rd Platoon, Company F, 423rd Infantry Regiment
424th Infantry Regiment
591st Field Artillery Battalion
592nd Field Artillery Battalion

From 9th Armored Division:
Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Combat Command B
14th Tank Battalion
27th Armored Infantry Battalion
Troop D, 89th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mechanized)
 with platoons from Troop E and Company F
Company B, 9th Armored Engineer Battalion
Company a, 811th Tank Destroyer Battalion (Self-Propelled)
Battery B, 482nd Anti-aircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons
 Battalion (Self-Propelled)
Company B, 2nd Armored Medical Battalion
Company C, 131st Armored Ordnance Maintenance Battalion

From 28th Infantry Division:
112th Infantry Regiment
229th Field Artillery Battalion
Company C, 103rd Engineer Combat Battalion

From 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment:
2nd Battalion, 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment

Attached or Supporting in January:

From XVIII Corps:
275th Armored Field Artillery Battalion
987th Field Artillery Battalion
Company B, 738th Tank Battalion (Mine Exploders)
Detachment from 994th Engineer Treadway Bridge Company
299th Engineer Combat Battalion
2nd Battalion, 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment
509th Parachute Infantry Battalion

From the 82nd Airborne Infantry Division:
508th Parachute Infantry Regiment

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- Hills, R. J. T. Phantom Was There. London: Edward Arnold & Co., 1957. Informative on the use of the Phantom regiment as a means of assisting in the command and control of large forces during World War II.
- Jessup, John E., Jr. and Coakley, Robert W. A Guide to the Study and Use of Military History. Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1978. Useful basic work for writers and readers of military history.
- Keegan, John. The Face of Battle. New York: The Viking Press, 1976. Keegan's premise is an excellent guide for any would-be historian of the military art.
- MacDonald, Charles B. The Siegfried Line Campaign. Washington: Chief of Military History, 1963. Excellent overview of conditions on the Siegfried Line and of the reduction of the German defenses.
- _____. A Time for Trumpets: The Untold Story of the Bulge. New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1985. This is not the untold story of the Bulge. Like virtually all other authors on the Bulge, MacDonald fails to tell the story of reduction of the Bulge. However, his work is lucid and uses many previously untapped German sources.

- Macksey, Kenneth. Panzer Division: The Mailed Fist. New York: Ballantine Books, 1968. This little book traces organizational changes in the panzer divisions quite adequately.
- Merriam, Robert E. Dark December. Chicago: Ziff-Davis Publishing Co., 1947. Though Merriam's work was one of the earliest accounts of the Battle of the Bulge, it remains one of the best.
- Nobecourt, Jacques. Hitlers Last Gamble. New York: Schocken Books, 1967. Good on the development of the German plan of the campaign.
- Pogue, Forest C. The Supreme Command. Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1954. Pogue's work provides the background necessary to understanding the framework of the decisions at theater level which led to the Bulge and the decision which led to its eventual reduction.
- Pallud, Jean Paul. Battle of the Bulge: Then and Now. London: After the Battle, 1984. Pallud has written the "buffs'" delight. Pallud does plumb the depths of minutia, but in doing so he provides the best order of battle information and day-by-day accounting of units published to date.
- Price, Frank J. Troy H. Middleton: A Biography. Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1974. Price's account is useful for its insights on Middleton's view of his Corps' position in the Ardennes.
- Ridgway, Matthew B. Soldier: The Memoirs of Matthew B. Ridgway. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956. Ridgway's memoirs are based on his meticulously kept war diaries. Ridgway's book is useful in understanding his thought process, but only to the extent which he wishes to reveal that process. This is not unusual in a memoir nor does it make it any less useful.
- Ruppenthal, Roland G. Logistical Support of the Armies. 2 vols. Washington: Chief of Military History, 1958. Indispensable to understanding the complexities of the logistics problem in the ETO.
- Seventh Armored Division Association. The Lucky Seventh. Dallas, Texas: The Taylor Publishing Co., 1982. This little book is primarily useful because it concludes with the biographies of nearly 500 war-time members of the 7th Armored Division.

Toland, John. Battle: The Story of the Bulge. New York: Random House, 1959. Toland's account is the best attempt to recount the history of the Bulge from the perspective of the fighting troops. Accordingly, it is laced with personal anecdotes.

U.S. Army Armor School. The Defense of St. Vith, Belgium: 17-23 December 1944. Fort Knox, Kentucky, 1949. This study was commissioned by Bruce C. Clarke while at the Armor School. It is primarily useful for its maps and diagrams.

Whiting, Charles. Death of a Division. New York: Stein and Day, 1981. Whiting's account of the surrender of two regiments of the 106th Infantry Division is very critical of the leadership of the 106th and of US generalship during the Bulge.

Wilmot, Chester. The Struggle for Europe: World War II in Western Europe. New York: Harper and Row, 1952. Wilmot finds fault with American generalship in Europe. His argument has merit, but his objectivity is sometimes suspect for reasons other than his work on Field Marshal Montgomery's staff.

Government Reports:

Kays, Marvin D. "Weather Effects During the Battle of the Bulge and the Normandy Invasion." U.S. Army Electronics Research and Development Command, August, 1982. Kays not only describes the weather conditions which prevailed during the campaign, but also discusses the effects of weather on operations.

Leuttichau, Charles V. von. "The Ardennes Offensive: Germany's Situation In the Fall of 1944, Part 2: The Economic Situation", Office of the Chief of Military History, March 1953. Leuttichau reviews the capacity of Germany to provide supplies and equipment for the attack.

Thompson, Royce L. "American Intelligence On the German Counter Offensive (1 November-15 December 1944: Division Level)." Historical Section, SSUSA, March, 1949. Thompson shows that divisions acquired considerable combat information suggesting an offensive was in the offing.

_____. "Ardennes Campaign Statistics, 16 December 1944-January 1945." Office of the Chief of Military History, 1952. This piece is a compilation of statistics showing US losses and consumption during the campaign.

University of Oklahoma Research Institute. Department of Defense. "Disaster in Battle: Two Pre-Atomic Military Disasters." Johns Hopkins University, 25 August 1952. This report is an analysis of the events leading to the surrender of the 422nd and 423rd Infantry Regiments.

Periodicals:

MacDonald, Charles B. "The Neglected Ardennes." Military Review (April 1963): 74-89. MacDonald's article is a concise military history of the Ardennes and an excellent terrain analysis of the Ardennes and the Schnee Eifel.

Reeves, Joseph R. "Artillery in the Ardennes." The Field Artillery Journal 36 (March 1946): 138-184. Reeves' article is the most complete accounting of the artillery Order of Battle in the 1st Army area. Reeves, who served on the staff of the 1st Army Artillery, also reveals much about the doctrine and employment of artillery during World War II.

PRIMARY SOURCES

After Action Reports (Over 1,000 pages of reports, narratives and histories were consulted during the writing of this study. Like the units which produced them, after action reports are unique. There are great variations in format, detail and content. Consequently, their greatest use is to confirm information found in other sources. Some reports are very useful because of the addition of commander's notes. Therefore, they must be read, but read carefully.):

7th Armored Division and Attachments as of 16 December 1944:

- 7th AD Headquarters
- 7th AD Artillery
- 7th AD Trains
- Combat Command A
- Combat Command B
- Combat Command R
- 33rd Armored Engineer Battalion
- 434th Armored Field Artillery Battalion
- 440th Armored Field Artillery Battalion
- 23rd Armored Infantry Battalion
- 38th Armored Infantry Battalion
- 48th Armored Infantry Battalion
- 77th Armored Medical Battalion
- 203rd Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion

7th AD continued:

- 129th Ordnance Maintenance Battalion
- 87th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron Mechanized
- 17th Tank Battalion
- 31st Tank Battalion
- 40th Tank Battalion
- 814th Tank Destroyer Battalion

106th Infantry Division and Attachments as of 16 December:

- 106th ID Headquarters
- 589th Field Artillery Battalion
- 591st Field Artillery Battalion
- 592nd Field Artillery Battalion
- 14th Cavalry Group
 - 18th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron Mechanized
 - 32nd Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron Mechanized
- 424th Infantry Regiment
- 820th Tank Destroyer Battalion

28th Infantry Division:

- 112th Infantry Regiment

9th Armored Division:

- Combat Command B
- 16th Armored Field Artillery Battalion
- 27th Armored Infantry Battalion
- 14th Tank Battalion
- 811th Tank Destroyer Battalion

V Corps:

- 1st Infantry Division

XVIII Airborne Corps:

- XVIII Airborne Corps Headquarters
- 30th Infantry Division
- 75th Infantry Division

444th Anti-aircraft Artillery Battalion:

- 444th Anti-aircraft Artillery Battalion

Army Manuals:

FM 17-100. Armored Command Field Manual: The Armored Division, 1944. FM 17-100 was the basic how to fight manual for the Armored Division.

FM 100-5. Field Service Regulations. Operations, 1 June 1944.
FM 100-5, 1944 defined the Army's basic doctrine.

FM 100-5. Operations, 1 August 1982. This is the current
basic statement of Army doctrine.

American Papers:

General Bruce C. Clarke Papers located at Carlisle Barracks,
Pennsylvania. General Clarke's papers include very
little which is contemporary to the Bulge.

Major General John W. Leonard Papers located at Carlisle
Barracks, Pennsylvania. The Leonard Papers contain an
unpublished history of the 9th Armored Division written
by CPT Charles Gillett. Dated 3 September 1945, the
manuscript is an embellished after action report for the
division. The Leonard Papers contain little else of use
in this study. However, there is a great deal of infor-
mation concerning the capture of the Remagen Bridge by
Hoge's CCB.

Charles B. MacDonald Papers located at Carlisle Barracks,
Pennsylvania. The MacDonald papers contain notes,
documents and other materials MacDonald collected during
his research for A Time for Trumpets: The Untold Story
of the Battle of the Bulge. MacDonald's gift of his
research material will remain useful for years. Quite
apart from the great mass of American material, he has
collected many German first-person accounts of the
campaign and had many Germany unit histories translated.

General Matthew B. Ridgway Papers located at Carlisle
Barracks, Pennsylvania. The Ridgway papers are a
splendid resource on the many facets of General Ridgway.
Ridgway kept all orders and messages that he sent or
received. He also annotated each document to reflect
his views on a message or his intentions. Not only are
Ridgway's papers a valuable cache of historical data,
they tell the reader a great deal about how Ridgway
thought and operated.

William C. Sylvan Diary located at Carlisle Barracks, Penn-
sylvania. Sylvan served as the senior Aide de Camp to
General Courtney Hodges, Commanding General of 1st Army.
Though the papers are commonly referred to as the Sylvan
Diaries, they constitute the War Diary of 1st Army. The
Sylvan Diaries are useful in determining just what
1st Army knew and when.

John Toland Papers located in the Manuscripts Division of the Library of Congress, Washington, D. C. Toland has donated his notes and research materials for his many books. The materials for Battle: The Story of the Bulge contain notes of the enormous number of interviews that he conducted during his research. Toland's notes are the only first-hand evidence left by many participants in the campaign.

German Papers (The German manuscripts consulted in this study were prepared by the Historical Branch of the US European Command. The project began before the war ended and continued as long as the United States held German officers. They are a remarkable collection of work which have been widely quoted. However, they do vary in quality from short, terse answers to questions to lengthy and complete analysis of complex issues, such as the rationale for German strategic and operational decisions. Surprisingly, most are very complete. The Germans seemed to appreciate the chance to say their piece. Manteuffel's two manuscripts on the Bulge, for example, run to 300 pages.):

Blumentritt, General der Infanterie. The Ardennes Offensive, A Critique. MS# B-740.

Felber, General der Infanterie Hans. XIII Corps (1-25 Jan 45). MS# B-039.

Kittel, Generalmajor Friedrich. 62nd Volks Grenadier Division (16 Dec 1944-27 Jan 1945). MS# B-028.

Krueger, General der Panzertruppen Walter. Concerning the Offensive in the Ardennes from 16 Dec 44-2 Feb 45 (LVIII Panzer Corps). MS# B-321.

Lucht, General der Artillerie Walter. LXVI Corps (Oct 23-Dec 1944). MS# B-332.

Manteuffel, General der Panzertruppen Hasso von. Fifth Panzer Army (Ardennes Offensive). MS# B-151.

_____. Sequel to MS# B-151. MS# B-151a.

Moll, Oberstleutnant Dietrich. 18th Volks Grenadier Division (1 Sep 1944-25 Jan 1945). MS# B-688.

Priess, General der Waffen SS H. Commitment of the I SS Panzer Corps During the Ardennes Offensive (16 Dec 1944-25 Jan 1945). MS# A-877.

Schramm, Major Percy E. The Course of Events of the German Offensive in the Ardennes (16 Dec 1944-14 Jan 1945). MS# A-858.

_____. Command Organization for the Ardennes Offensive: Answers to the Questions of 15 Feb 1946. MS# A-861.

Wagener, Generalmajor Carl. Fifth Panzer Army (2 Nov 1944-16 Jan 1945). MS# B-235.

_____. Main Reasons for the Failure of the Ardennes Offensive. MS# A-963.

Waldenburg, Generalmajor Siegfried von. Commitment of the 116th Panzer Division in the Ardennes 1944-1945. MS# B-038.

Interviews and Correspondents:

Major General Andrew J. Adams. General Adams, commander of the 7th AD Trains, proved helpful on staff operations in the 7th AD and on the operations of the Trains. General Adams was interviewed in August 1984.

General Bruce C. Clarke. General Clarke was very helpful over the course of several months of correspondence and three interviews conducted in August 1984. General Clarke's analysis of the battle and his own efforts to understand what happened provided insight into the operations of the 7th AD.

Colonel Roy U. Clay. Colonel Clay, who commanded the 275th AFA, corresponded with the author throughout the project. Colonel Clay also consented to an interview conducted in August 1984.

Colonel Robert C. Erlenbusch. Colonel Erlenbusch, who commanded the 31st TB, provided commentary on the actions of his battalion against the Fuhrer Escort Brigade. He also wrote a detailed analysis of how he ran his battalion and on the reconstitution the 31st during January of 1945. Additionally, he provided sketches of those actions in which he participated. Colonel Erlenbusch was not only a willing correspondent, but also consented to an interview conducted in December 1984.

Colonel Marcus Griffin. Colonel Griffin, who commanded the 38th AIB, answered inquiries on the difficulty of assuming command of a battalion in the middle of a major battle. He also allowed the use of his personal copies of documents.

Major General Robert W. Hasbrouck. General Hasbrouck provided great assistance by reviewing the battle with the author both by mail and during an interview conducted in August 1984. He went to great length to explain what it is like to command a division in combat.

Brigadier General William M. Hoge. The Hoge interview is part of the US Army War College Oral History Program. It is a fascinating reminiscence by the man who built the Alcan Highway, the Bataan Highway, fought in the Bulge and whose Combat Command captured the Remagen Bridge. The Hoge interview is worth reading on its own merits.

General William A. Knowlton. General Knowlton, who commanded B Troop 87th RCN, provided valuable insight from the point of a troop commander.

Colonel Charles E. Leydecker. Colonel Leydecker, G-3, 7th AD, kindly responded to inquiries on how the division staff functioned during the battle.

Colonel John P. Wemple. Colonel Wemple, who commanded the 17th TB, provided sketches, maps and commentary on the actions of the 17th. He was particularly helpful on the conduct of the withdrawal from the St. Vith sector.

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